

Bride of Discord

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What if Discord hadn't been turned to stone by the Mane Six? What if he had escaped? It is three years following their battle with Discord and the Mane Six are happy in their new and comfortable lives, until their enemy returns and will only relieve Equestria of his havoc in exchange for a bride. AU Cover Art by Nstone53

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Bride of Discord

[Introduction](#)

[The Escape](#)

[The Gala](#)

[The Return](#)

[The Proposition](#)

[The Dilemma](#)

[The Decision](#)

[The Arrangement](#)

[The Gift](#)

[The Spark](#)

[The Mirror](#)

[The Advice](#)

[The Story](#)

[The Date](#)

[The Visit](#)

[The Relapse](#)

[The Emptiness](#)

[The Confession](#)

[The Wedding](#)

The Escape

UGH! WHEN AM I GONNA STOP STARTING NEW FICS?!

Oh well, after watching Keep Calm and Flutter On, I wanted to write a fic centered around Fluttershy and Discord. I also thought, what if Discord hadn't been defeated by the Mane Six? So the idea for this was inspired by *Beauty and the Beast*, movie and story, an old Swedish legend called *Bride of the Lindorm King*, and a couple stuff from other fics. I hope you enjoy.

Disclaimer: DO NOT own My Little Pony. If I did, there would be more Fluttercord.

Everything was going well. They had found the Elements of Harmony and they were all returned to normal. Their enemy thought nothing of it, only yawned on his red and black throne as Twilight powered up her spell. Light illuminated the six ponies as they were lifted into the air. It was the same as when they had defeated Nightmare Moon, until more light shot from their necklaces.

"What's this?" Discord said in wonder.

Fluttershy had sworn to close her eyes, but opened one for a moment. Even through the bright light, she could clearly see the draconequus' face. She recognized it as pure fear.

"No," he uttered.

The pegasus couldn't stand it anymore and shut her eye again, as Twilight opened hers, revealing them to be white. As a rainbow shot from their bodies, Fluttershy heard the creature's horrifying scream. She tried to block it out, but it was useless. That scream would forever haunt her.

When the blast was over, the friends gently floated to the ground.

Ponyville was back in order, but there was something that wasn't right. Pinkie was the first to notice.

"Hey, where's Discord?"

Rainbow Dash rolled her eyes. "Don't you know, Pinkie? We turned him to stone."

"I know that, but where's his statue?"

The others looked around.

"She's right," Applejack said. "Where is he?"

"I don't understand," Twilight lamented. "That spell should have turned him to stone!"

Fluttershy gasped. "We didn't *kill* him, did we?!"

"I don't think so. He'd still be here."

"Unless we vaporized him!" Pinkie Pie shrieked. "Or turned him to grass!"

Rarity yelped and stood on her back legs. "You mean we may be walking on him?!"

Rainbow and Fluttershy leapt into the air in horror.

"Guys, we didn't kill him!" Applejack assured them, but then turned nervously to the purple unicorn. "Right, Twilight?"

"We shouldn't have," Twilight replied. "The Elements of Harmony cannot destroy. They may work in mysterious ways, but they cannot destroy. Whatever they did to Discord, they at least returned everything to normal."

"So what do we do now?" Fluttershy asked.

"We must inform Princess Celestia about this."

A few hours later in Canterlot, the six ponies told the princess all that had happened. After hearing this, Celestia demanded to speak with Twilight in private.

"We didn't kill him, did we?" she asked once they were alone.

Celestia shook her head. "It is not in the Elements' power to do such a deed."

"Princess, what *do* they do exactly? I mean they banished Nightmare Moon to the moon, but then later changed her back to good. Why did they turn Discord into stone?"

"The Elements' job is to restore balance in the land. It is complicated, but basically what they do is turn something into what it is on the inside. The first time they were used on Luna, she had darkness in her heart and that's what banished her to the moon. The second time, there was something good inside her that wanted to get out and that's what turned her back into my little sister. Discord, however..." She trailed off and looked at said creature's picture in the stain glass. "His heart is as cold as stone."

"Does he even have one?" Twilight inquired.

"Every creature has a heart, though some of them refuse to show it."

"So what did the elements do to him now?"

She paused. "Nothing."

The unicorn's eyes widened. "What?"

"Nothing. He escaped before the spell hit him."

Twilight was astonished. "But...but...I restored everyone's memories! Ponyville, it's fine now! The Elements should have worked!"

"They did, and Discord saw that. He saw that he could not break apart your friendship with the others, so he chose to be a coward and fled."

"How...how do you know that's what happened?"

"I know Discord. He's smart enough to know when to flee."

"So he's still out there? We have to find him! Equestria's not safe as long as he's free!"

"No, he knows not to make another attempt to takeover, not without time to contemplate his next move. When he does, that's when we take action."

"But what if...?"

"Twilight Sparkle, we do not know where Discord is. The only thing we can do is to wait for him to come out of hiding. When he does, I want you and your friends to be ready. Do you understand?"

She opened her mouth to protest, but then sighed and nodded.

"Good. Now, I will leave the Elements with you, so you will be ready when the time comes. But first, I will cast a spell protecting them, so Discord cannot take them again."

Twilight nodded again. "I understand, Princess."

So the six ponies went back home and waited for Discord's return. They each wore their Elements at all times for precaution. For weeks, they waited in agitation for their enemy to make his attack. They told no pony else that the Spirit of Chaos had escaped, for Celestia did not want her subjects to panic. It was because of this that the friends went about their daily routines as if there was nothing to worry about, but they each slept with one eye open, all except Fluttershy, who slept with two.

Soon the days turned into weeks, then months, until after a year, the ponies assumed Discord had left Equestria for good. They began feeling more at ease, with a few exceptions. Twilight became more and more worried each day and studied divination, in hopes of finding their enemy's location. So far, she had had no such luck.

Fluttershy spent nights waking up with a scream, after experiencing a nightmare where the monster had her in his clutches. Of all the frightening creatures she had encountered in her lifetime, she had never been as afraid as she was of Discord. Even though she had not seen him in a while, he still haunted her. Everywhere she turned his yellow and red eyes were there, staring into her soul. Sometimes he would appear as three butterflies, or as his stained glass image. Whatever form he took, it felt like he was always there, watching her.

She told her friends of this, but they said it was purely her imagination. This did not take any of the nightmares away.

Then Twilight became a princess, which turned every pony's life around. While Twilight was still living in Ponyville, she spent most of her time in Canterlot or elsewhere performing royal duties. As for her other five friends, they were all famous after saving Equestria numerous times and being friends of a princess.

Rarity's designs became more popular than ever. She had so many orders to keep up with, that she had to hire help. Her sister Sweetie Belle had little talent in sewing, but did what she could to organize everything. Her friend Apple Bloom proved to have a greater knowledge of design and Rarity was so impressed that she made the young filly her apprentice. Even Scootaloo provided assistance, by making deliveries with her scooter.

Rainbow Dash's dream finally came true and was recruited by the Wonderbolts. With them, she traveled all over Equestria, performing her tricks and earning the praise she adored. She still made time for her friends and offered them tickets whenever they were in town. Pinkie Pie attended all the shows and derbies and was Rainbow's biggest fan.

While keeping her job at Sugar Cube Corner, Pinkie Pie kept a party planning service in Canterlot. Whenever there was a special event, the royals called her. Not only did she always throw the best of parties, but she did it for free. She did not care for money, only fun!

When making visits to Twilight in Canterlot, Applejack would take the opportunity to sell her apples. They were much more

appreciated once every pony heard they were grown in the princess's hometown. As a result, Applejack earned a lot of money and not only managed to buy a tractor for Big Macintosh and fix Granny Smith's broken hip, but added a new floor to the barn, so whenever her relatives visited, they could stay the night. Whatever money was left was donated to the Canterlot Orphanage. Because of this, the orphans looked up to her. She also became a fan favorite at the rodeo competitions, whether she won a blue ribbon or not. Her athleticism was much admired and cowboy attire was made fashionable, thanks to Rarity.

In their new glamorous and comfortable lifestyles, the ponies slowly forgot about Discord altogether. Every pony was happy, save one.

Once the six were known to the public, many stallions began taking interest in Fluttershy, who had turned out to be a great beauty. She received a lot of gentlemen callers now, but she refused all of them. Although she was of marriageable age now, the pegasus was not ready for such a thing, let alone dating. She had gained more confidence over the years, but the idea of romance terrified her. Having a boyfriend meant spending time with a single stallion that might be the one or might not. She knew he would be doing most of the talking, and asking, and touching, etc. She was not prepared for that.

She continued having the nightmares. The evil face of the draconequus would not leave her mind. She knew he was still out there, and he would come back to turn her nasty again. Despite the good fortune of her friends, she could not move on. She attended social events for their sake, but wallowed in fear when alone.

Meanwhile, Twilight Sparkle was studying and learning more about magic and being a princess each day. She took pleasure in it, but sometimes, she would look out the window and wonder about her enemy in hiding. It had been almost three years since he had vanished without a trace. Where was he? What had he been doing all this time? When was he going to strike?

No pony knew.

**So that was my theory on how the Elements of Harmony work.
Yes, I'm still working on "It's All Hooey," but I just happened to
write this in between.**

The Gala

The story is now being translated into French and Spanish! You can find the Spanish version by Morgwaine on my account page. The French version by NightWind-NLR on deviant art: art/Une-Mariee-pour-Discord-La-fuite-440318295

Okay, this chapter is still setting the scene. Don't worry, more will happen soon.

Note that the story currently on FimFiction WAS uploaded by me, so don't worry!

The Grand Galloping Gala was next week and Twilight had called all her friends to help with the preparations, except for Rainbow Dash, as she and the Wonderbolts were part of the entertainment anyway. Applejack was to be in charge of the food, Fluttershy was to bring her songbirds, Pinkie Pie was to decorate and Rarity was to make every pony's dresses.

The four approached the palace gate and were let through, as the guards already knew them. Instead of Twilight, they were greeted by her brother.

"Hello, girls," Shining Armor said. "We're so glad you could make it. Twilie and the others are already having dinner. They asked me to escort you."

Applejack sighed in relief. "Thank goodness! I'm starved!"

Pinkie Pie bounced down the hallway. "I love having dinner with the princesses!"

"You love having dinner with any pony, darling," Rarity chuckled.

In the dining hall, Celestia sat at the head of the table, Twilight and Spike on her right, Luna and Cadence on her left. When she saw

her friends, the purple alicorn forgot her manners for a moment, leaping out of her seat and attacking them with a hug.

"I'm so happy you're here!" she exclaimed. "I haven't seen you guys in weeks!"

"We're happy to be here," Applejack declared. "Now how 'bout we chow down?!"

As they ate, the friends caught up with one another. Twilight told them about the new spells she had learned, Rarity talked about the dresses she had in mind for the Gala, Applejack asked if the orphans could be invited to the event, and Pinkie babbled on about pudding. Fluttershy politely listened to the conversations and nodded when necessary. Then Shining Armor and Cadence had big news.

"Should I tell them?" the alicorn asked her husband.

"I think you have the right," he replied with a wink.

She smiled at all of them. "We're having a baby!"

Every pony gasped.

"Wait a second!" Pinkie cried. Then she took a sip of water and spat it out. "You're having a baby?! Congratulations! I get to play with it, right?"

Cadence laughed. "Of course, Pinkie."

Twilight clapped. "Yay! I'm going to be an aunt!"

"When are you due?" Rarity asked.

"Ten months," answered Shining Armor.

"How wonderful," Fluttershy complimented, speaking for the first time that evening.

"This calls for a toast!" Celestia announced. She lifted her goblet. "Here's to the new prince or princess!"

The others lifted their goblets and cheered in agreement.

"Wait," Spike paused. "I'm not gonna be the one to change its diaper, am I?"

Every pony laughed. Fluttershy only smiled softly. She was truly happy for the young couple, but for some reason, that happiness could not be reflected. Applejack was the only one who noticed Fluttershy's depression and stopped laughing. Her friend had been this way for quite a while now. While she engaged in social activities as much as possible, she never seemed to take pleasure in them. It bothered the cowgirl and she was determined to find out what was going on.

The next day, preparations for the Grand Galloping Gala began. Pinkie Pie brought her party cannon into the ballroom and fired balloons and confetti all over the place. Princess Celestia was sure the Gala was going to be less boring this year. Rarity called the girls in one by one to take measurements and ask their opinion on their dresses, though they knew to trust the unicorn's vision and to not make too many suggestions.

After gathering food supplies from the market, Applejack decided to take a stroll in the garden. She would not have to make the food until the day before the event, so she had some time to herself. She followed a melodic sound and encountered Fluttershy conducting her bird chorus. She stopped them in the middle of a song.

"No, it's more like..." she sang a few notes in that sweet voice of hers. "Understand?"

"Howdy, Fluttershy!" Applejack said in a voice loud enough to startle the birds. The pony beamed apologetically. "Oops, sorry."

The pegasus sighed and gave a small smile. "It's okay. We were about to take a break anyway."

Applejack studied her face carefully. "Is somethin' wrong, Sugar Cube?"

"What? Oh no, nothing is wrong."

She wasn't convinced by her tone. "Fluttershy, I'm gonna be honest with you. You've seemed to be down in the dumps as of late. You know I can't remember the last time I've seen you smile? I mean *really* smile, like you meant it?"

Fluttershy paused and turned away. "It's nothing, really."

Applejack took a deep breath. "It's those nightmares, isn't it? You're still havin' them, aren't ya?"

The pegasus floated to the ground and hid her face shamefully. Her friend put an assuring hoof on her back.

"Sugar Cube," she said slowly, "it's been three years. Discord's long gone. You got nothin' to fear anymore. You gotta let it go."

She sniffed. "I know, but the nightmares just won't go away, even when I'm not asleep! It's like everywhere I turn, he's there, watching, waiting to...to...I don't know! Take me away or something! I just...I can't..."

Then she started to cry. Applejack stroked her mane in comfort.

"Hey, it's okay. It's all in your imagination. Discord's not comin' back and he certainly isn't gonna take you away."

Neither of them knew, but in a cave far away, their old enemy was watching the scene in a mirror. He could not help but laugh.

"It's just *too* amusing!" he exclaimed. "Oh, the dramatic irony of it all! Ooh, imagine the looks on their faces when I appear out of the blue after all this time!"

The image in the mirror faded and only his reflection was visible.

"And why have we been hiding all these years?" his image mocked.

"So we can lead those naïve ponies into a false sense of security,

so that when we strike it'll be a surprise! Based on their moods now, I'd say the time has come! They all think I'm gone for good!"

"Except for that wimpy pegasus."

"Oh, who cares? No pony listens to her anyway." He chuckled. "Oh, that pony is in for quite a fright."

"Exactly what's the plan this time? Turning them into their opposites again?"

"Oh yeah, cuz *that* worked out *so* well! No, we can't do something that can be undone. We'll have to make a more... *permanent* change." He tapped his chin with his eagle claw.

"The problem is those Elements of Harmony," his reflection said. "As long as they are willing to use them, we are not safe."

His eyes widened as an idea hit him. "Yes, but what if they *weren't* willing to use them?"

The reflection smiled evilly. "Ooh, I like the sound of that! So what's the plan?"

"I'll tell ya later. Those ponies are in for the surprise of their lives!"

He broke into a roar of maniacal laughter, which echoed throughout the cave. He then glanced around at the emptiness of his lair.

"You know? I've *really* got to stop talking to myself."

The Gala was only a day away when Spike coughed up a message for Princess Celestia.

"There is a crisis in Saddle Arabia," she announced to the other princesses after reading the parchment.

"What sort of crisis?" Luna asked.

"It lacks detail, but it says they need you, Cadence and I to come to

their aid."

"Why not me?" Twilight questioned.

"That's what it says. Even if they requested all of us, one of us will have to stay behind."

"But you can't all leave right now! What about the Gala?"

"We must leave immediately. You will be in charge of everything, Twilight, including the Grand Galloping Gala."

The young alicorn froze. "M-me? Rule Equestria? Run the Gala? By myself?"

Celestia nodded. "You will have your friends and brother to help you, of course, but yes. Until we return, all royal duties will be appointed to you."

"But...I haven't even been a princess for a year yet and now you want me to run the kingdom by myself? Do you think I'm ready?"

The tall white alicorn lifted her chin with her hoof. "I do."

When the others heard about this, they panicked.

"You mean they're *not* going to attend the Gala?" Rarity exclaimed. "Oh, and I made them those three dresses for nothing!"

"We're doing this all by ourselves?" Fluttershy asked worryingly.

"Aw, we've thrown big parties before," Pinkie said cheerfully. "It'll be no sweat."

"But something as big as the Grand Galloping Gala? It seems like a performance. Oh, I think I'm going to..."

Applejack caught her before she hit the floor.

"I'm nervous too," Twilight declared. "But don't worry, girls. I know we can pull this off if we work together!"

This lifted every pony's spirits and they cheered. Well, every pony

but Fluttershy, who uttered a half-hearted, "Yay."

"Well, what are we waiting for?" said Rarity. "We have a gala to prepare!"

"I'll go get my birds to practice."

Her four friends watched in confusion as the pegasus trotted sadly off.

"What's wrong with Fluttershy?" Pinkie Pie wondered. "The Grand Galloping Gala's tomorrow! She should be happy! Why isn't she happy?"

"You know how she is with social events," Rarity said.

"But I've never seen her like this before," Twilight noted.

"It's the nightmares again," Applejack explained. "They seem to be gettin' worse."

The alicorn's face filled with concern. "How long has she been like this?"

"A while. I can't remember the last time I saw her smile."

Pinkie pondered. "You know what? Neither can I! I mean when she does give a smile, it looks forced."

"You know she's been getting invitations from an enormous array of stallions?" Rarity mentioned. "But she rejects all of them! I simply cannot understand it! If I received that much attention, I would bask in it!"

"You say she's having nightmares?" Twilight asked. "Do you mean the ones involving...?"

She didn't need to finish. "Exactly. She can't seem to get that monster out o' her mind."

"But he's been gone for three years!" Rarity reminded them. "What is she afraid of?"

"We gotta find a way to turn her frown upside-down!" Pinkie declared. "But how?"

They all thought for a moment. Then Rarity's face lit up.

"What she needs is a social boost! She should do more at the Gala tomorrow night than conduct the bird choir! She should sing a song!"

"You're right!" Pinkie agreed. "She has an amazing voice, but she doesn't show it off. This could be her chance!"

"What about her stage fright?" Applejack questioned.

"Oh please," Rarity huffed. "It's high time she got over it."

"I suppose she could sing," Twilight said. "We'll have to ask her first."

Fluttershy was reluctant in the beginning, but then decided it would be something to take her mind off of everything and accepted. Besides, she was much more afraid of her nightmares coming true than performing onstage.

The posh ponies were astonished when they entered the castle the next evening. The ballroom was decorated like a six-year-old's birthday party, the table was covered in 'peasant' baked goods, the orchestra was playing the Pony Pokey and Princess Twilight was greeting the guests instead of Celestia. She of course only did this for the first few minutes and then left to mingle. The scene was also lively due to the presence of the Canterlot orphans. The Canterlot elite were shocked at first, but soon settled into the rusticity of it all. They had to admit, the Gala was a lot more entertaining this year.

Pinkie Pie was in the middle of a song when she suddenly cried, "RAINBOW DASH!"

The Wonderbolts had just entered the ballroom and Rainbow Dash was tackled by the enthusiastic pony.

"I'm so glad you're here!" Pinkie shrieked.

The blue pegasus wrapped an arm around her and laughed. "Good to see you too, Pinkie."

She was then met with Twilight and Applejack, both of which offered her a hug.

"Hey, where are Rarity and Fluttershy?" she asked, glancing around.

"Fluttershy's practicing her song and Rarity went to pick up the Cutie Mark Crusaders from the train station," Applejack explained with a chuckle. "Though, they're not exactly the Cutie Mark Crusaders anymore."

"Whoa, whoa. Back up. Fluttershy's practicing what now?"

"She's singing a song tonight," answered Twilight.

Rainbow looked at her in disbelief. "Fluttershy. Onstage?"

"We thought it would be a good confidence boost for her."

"And what was that you said about the CMC?"

Applejack was about to reply when a young voice cried, "Rainbow Dash!"

It belonged to Scootaloo, who was racing towards her role model. Rainbow greeted her adopted sister with a hug.

"I missed ya, Scoots! Let's have a look at ya. Wow, you've grown, kid. And..." She paused. "Is that...?"

Scootaloo lifted her skirt to reveal a picture of a red scooter on her flank. "Can you believe it? I finally earned my cutie mark!"

Rainbow and Twilight gasped. Applejack smirked. "Tried to tell ya."

"Congrats, kiddo!" The older pegasus rubbed her purple mane playfully. "I always knew you had slick moves on that scooter!"

"I know!" Scootaloo exclaimed. "How could I not have known that was my special talent?!"

Then Rarity approached with Sweetie Belle and Apple Bloom who, like Scootaloo, were dressed elegantly. Apple Bloom wore a glittering red dress and had switched her pink bow with a sparkling green one. Sweetie Belle wore glass slippers to match her blue dress with translucent trimming. Scootaloo's hair was long and wild and her dress had a magnificent blend of orange and purple.

"Wow," Twilight marveled. "You girls look beautiful! Did you make them those dresses, Rarity?"

"Would you believe it?" Rarity replied. "Dear Apple Bloom here came up with the designs!"

"Really?" Applejack said.

"Yeah!" her sister exclaimed. "And guess what appeared yesterday?"

She lifted her skirt, making Applejack gawk at her cutie mark. It was an apple being painted red by a brush.

"Why...why didn't you tell me? I knew Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle...I was worried you..."

"I wanted it to be a surprise! I was so good at designin' dresses I thought I could use my designin' skills to repaint the clubhouse! When I was done, this thing appeared!"

Applejack sniffed and hugged her little sister. "My little Apple Bloom has finally blossomed!"

"But you said Sweetie Belle had her cutie mark too," Twilight said.

"I do!" the little unicorn piped as she revealed her flank.

Sweetie Belle's cutie mark was a lavender musical note ringing a pink bell. Twilight did not need to ask what her talent was.

"I always knew you had a lovely singing voice."

"I got it at the talent show," Sweetie Belle explained. "We were doing a stand-up comedy act, but no pony was laughing."

"Then Sweetie Belle started singing," Scootaloo interjected, "and we joined in."

"When every pony clapped, I realized that not only do I love singing, but I'm very good at it! Then I got my cutie mark!"

"And we won!" Apple Bloom added.

"You three sure have come a long way," Rainbow noted.

"We all have," said Twilight.

Neither of them noticed the gray stallion listening from afar. His deer antler and goat horn were hidden under his top hat, the only things that would not change, along with his yellow and red eyes. He smiled to himself at the alicorn's statement.

"We have indeed, Twilight Sparkle, including me."

I checked, a horse pregnancy generally lasts eleven months.

So I've seen various versions of the CMC's cutie marks, and this is what I think they should be. Inspiration for their dresses can be found here: [post/25180289513/cutie-mark-crusaders-grand-gallop ing-gala](https://www.deviantart.com/25180289513/cutie-mark-crusaders-grand-gallop-ing-gala) (or just google it)

I will try to update soon.

The Return

Thanks for the reviews so far.

So far, the Gala was a success. Even the snobbiest of ponies were enjoying themselves. While Pinkie Pie kept the entertainment going, Rainbow Dash and Applejack were hanging with the orphans, who were eager to see them both.

"I wanna be just like you!" they kept saying to either one or the other.

"Aw, shucks," Applejack blushed.

"Think big, kids," Rainbow said. "With a lot of practice and guts, you can go anywhere!"

"Girls," Twilight interjected. "Have either of you seen Fluttershy? It's almost time for her to go on."

"She wasn't in her room?" Applejack asked.

"No, I've checked."

"She's probably in the garden. Ya know how she feels more comfortable with the critters."

"I'll go get her," Rainbow volunteered.

Indeed, Fluttershy was in the garden, warming up her voice. She was so nervous, she felt like it was going to crack.

"Oh, what am I doing?" she muttered to herself. "I can't go up in front of every pony and sing."

"Why not? We all know you're great."

She turned to see Rainbow Dash in her Wonderbolts uniform. She

embraced her with a smile.

"I'm happy to see you."

"Really?" Rainbow asked. "Because the others told me that you haven't been very happy lately."

Fluttershy glanced down at her hooves. "Well, um..."

"They say it's because you keep having nightmares about Discord?"

She looked up at her with serious eyes. "It was different. In my dreams, he usually just holds me and laughs. That's what I dreamt he did last night, but this time, he was..." She shivered. "Stroking my mane and...I was letting him. I didn't even put up a fight. I..."

Rainbow put her hoof around her. "Hey, it was just a dream. You've got to hang loose. This is a party! That reminds me. It's time for your song."

"Oh, I don't really feel like singing..."

"Don't tell me you've still got stage fright! Come on, don't you remember how you helped us all with that hurricane?"

"Singing's different from flying."

"You're a great singer! You were able to sing that pet song with me."

"That was when I was only around you and the critters. But there are hundreds of ponies here, watching me and..."

"Don't worry. I'll be right there to support you. We all will."

Fluttershy gulped. "Okay."

Discord was bored with the entire scene, though he had to admit this year's gala was much more interesting than last year's and the year before. Still, there just wasn't enough chaos! So to entertain himself, he pulled a few pranks on the posh ponies, like making a hare

appear in the punch bowl, but he could not draw attention to himself until the time was right.

He looked around the room and noticed that the little dragon Spike was attempting to get a dance with Rarity. He rolled his eyes. *Give it up, kid. It's never going to happen.* Though he had to admire his persistence. Meanwhile, that party pony Pinkie Pie was unknowingly making a fool of herself.

"I'm the P to the INKIE to the P to I to E," she sang. "And while I'm at it ponies, WON'T YOU PLEASE BE FRIENDS WITH ME?! I'm Pinkielicious!"

It was then that Twilight pulled the microphone away. *Thank you!* Discord silently said to himself. *You finally do something right!*

The princess tapped the mic, getting every pony's attention.

"Mares and gentle colts," she addressed, "welcome to the Grand Galloping Gala! I hope you are all enjoying yourselves."

A cheer erupted from the orphans. The Lord of Chaos grunted. *Why in the world did they invite a bunch of annoying little brats?!*

"Well, there's more to come," Twilight continued. "We have a wide range of entertainment planned for you tonight, including an air show from the Wonderbolts."

The crowd stomped their hooves and the Wonderbolts flew up and bowed slightly. Discord simply yawned. *I might as well do it now,* he thought, but the alicorn kept talking.

"But first, we're going to hear a song from a very good friend of mine. Mares and gentle colts, the Element of Kindness herself: Fluttershy!"

Oh, goody! The little wimpy pegasus is going to sing! This ought to be hilarious. Then he noticed the awestruck looks on the stallions. *What are they staring at?* Discord followed their gaze and dropped the glass of chocolate milk he had been drinking.

The yellow pegasus was walking nervously up to the mic. She wore

a flowing, translucent green dress with white daisies braided in her smooth pink mane. It was the first time in years that Discord had seen the Element of Kindness. His mirror did not count. And she was...she was...

He shook the thought out of his head. It was just a momentary lapse.

Fluttershy looked out towards the audience and felt her knees buckling. Then she noticed her five best friends and the Cutie Mark Crusaders in the front row, giving her assuring smiles. She glanced over at the pianist, who nodded and played her starting note. Her voice was weak at first.

" *Can...any pony...* " she cleared her throat, "*find me...some pony to...?* "

She stopped in panic. Sweetie Belle saw her plight and sang, "*Love!* "

The pegasus looked at her with thanks. Then the pianist started playing. As her cue approached, Fluttershy grew more nervous, so Sweetie Belle leapt up onstage and nodded to her with assurance. This made her more confident and she sang a little louder.

" *Each morning I get up I die a little*

Can barely stand on my feet... "

The unicorn filly sang backup, " *Take a look at yourself!* "

" *Take a look in the mirror and cry*

Lord what you're doing to me.

I have spent all my years in believing you

But I just can't get no relief, Lord!

Some pony... "

Sweetie Belle urged the audience to join in. " *Some pony!* "

Fluttershy started to smile. " *Some pony...* "

" *Some pony!*" sang her friends.

" *Can any pony find me...some pony to love?*"

The ponies stomped their hooves and cheered. Fluttershy blushed.

"You're doing great," Sweetie Belle whispered. "Now sing louder, and with more feeling!"

She took a breath and did so.

" *Got no feel, I got no rhythm*

I just keep losing my beat... "

Others in the audience started singing. " *She just keeps losing her beat !*"

" *I'm okay, I'm alright.* "

Apple Bloom and Scootaloo joined them onstage. " *She's alright, she's alright!*"

" *Ain't gonna face no defeat!*

I just gotta get out of this prison cell!

One day I'm gonna be free, Lord!

Some pony... "

" *Some pony!*"

" *Some pony...* "

" *Some pony!*"

" *Can any pony find me...?*" Fluttershy pulled the mic off the stand. " *Some pony to love?!* "

A wide grin spread across her face as she continued singing. Soon

the audience was nothing but background vocals and she was lost in a world of her own. In the spur of the moment, she flew high into the air.

" She works hard! "

" Every day... "

" Every day! "

" I try and I try and I try!

But every pony wants to put me down

They say I'm going crazy

They say I got a lot of water in my brain

Got no common sense

I got no pony left to believe!

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! "

Discord watched her performance in astonishment. Was this the same pegasus he had met in the labyrinth? Was this the same pegasus who ran at the sight of butterflies? Who hardly ever uttered an audible word? Was this pony singing in that strong, confident voice, spinning circles in the air, shining in the spotlight, really the 'weak and helpless' Fluttershy?

He watched as she danced during the interlude. Every move she made was delicate and graceful, not a single flaw present. It made him sick. *I have to put a stop to this!*

The three fillies started singing again, *" Find her some pony to love... "*

The audience joined in, *" Find her some pony to love... "*

As they repeated the line, Fluttershy kept twirling in the air, forgetting all her troubles. For the first time in her life, she felt happy.

Then she felt something grab her hoof and spin her around, but she was so lost she thought nothing of it. She did not even hear the screams from the ponies. It was after her mysterious partner had dipped her that Fluttershy opened her eyes and her smile disappeared.

Standing over her, holding her in his arms, was the very object of her nightmares.

"My dear Fluttershy, I had no idea you had such a lovely voice!"

She was frozen in place and had lost all knowledge of speech. She could not even scream. A cry from a familiar voice broke her out of her trance.

"Get off of her!"

Rainbow Dash cut between them and protectively moved her friend behind her.

"What?" the draconequus shrugged innocently. "We were only dancing."

"Discord," Twilight growled between her teeth.

"Ah, Twilight Sparkle. Or should I say *your highness* ? Surprised to see me? Well, it certainly has been a while since last we met. Sorry I didn't send you a postcard." He glanced down at the fillies onstage. "Well, if it isn't my three little saviors!"

Apple Bloom and Sweetie Belle hid behind their sisters, while Scootaloo sought protection from the closest adult, Pinkie.

"Stop stalling, Discord!" the princess bellowed. "Why are you here?"

"I thought it was obvious. I've come to take over Equestria!"

The crowd gasped. The orphans cowered in fear and huddled around Applejack.

"Ha!" Twilight smirked. "You should have stayed in hiding, Discord! Now that you've revealed yourself, we can turn you to stone!"

"Oh, really?" Discord said. "As I recall, you need the Elements of Harmony for that."

"Yes! Exact..." She then looked around at her friends and realized that they weren't wearing their necklaces. Then she remembered that they had stopped wearing them after a year when they figured Discord was never returning. She felt foolish now.

But she stood defiantly. "We don't need the Elements of Harmony to teach you a lesson!"

Light enveloped Twilight's horn as she prepared a spell. Discord raised an eyebrow.

"You're kidding, right?"

She shot a purple beam at him to show she wasn't kidding. He swatted it away as if it were a housefly.

"You really think *that's* going to stop me? Have you forgotten?"

He then snapped his eagle talons and Twilight's horn disappeared.

"Hey!" she cried. "Give that back!"

"Really, Twilight Sparkle? Are you as big a stick in the mud as Celestia?"

He snapped his fingers again and a puddle of mud appeared beneath the alicorn's hooves. Pinkie Pie snickered.

"Stick in the mud! That's funny!"

Twilight groaned and used her wings to pull herself out. "Just you wait until Princess Celestia gets back! She'll give you your just desserts!"

Discord clutched his stomach as he laughed. "What's the matter, Twilight? Can't run a kingdom by yourself? You need Mommy Celestia to come and make everything all better?"

"Hey!" Rainbow Dash shouted. "No pony insults my friends and gets

away with it!"

She charged toward him, but he only had to step off to the side to dodge her. Rainbow hit a pillar, almost causing it to fall.

"Have you ponies learnt *nothing* from our last encounter?" He cackled. "You even thought I was gone for good!" He looked towards Fluttershy. "Except for you, my dear."

The pegasus was stunned. "How...how did you...?"

She tensed as he took her chin in his claw and said lowly, "I've been watching you."

Rainbow had gained consciousness and stood between them again. "You touch her one more time and you're gonna get it, Discord!"

He held up his hands. "Very well. I have other things to attend to anyway." He turned to Twilight. "I'm afraid Celestia won't be able to help you, given her current predicament in," he used air quotes, "Saddle Arabia."

The alicorn's tilted her head in confusion. "What do you mean?"

He chuckled and snapped his fingers, causing an image to materialize. The crowd gasped as they saw Princesses Celestia, Luna and Cadence sitting in a cage, their horns missing from their heads. Shining Armor narrowed his eyes at Discord.

"What have you done with my wife?!"

"She's perfectly fine, I assure you. So is her foal, by the way, though it would be a shame if something were to happen to her mother before her birth."

The prince's eyes widened. "Her?"

"Yes, you're having a girl! Congratulations and blah, blah, blah!"

"If you hurt Cadence...!"

Discord snapped the image away. "Wouldn't dream of it, but if any of

you ponies even *try* to defeat me in any way, your princesses get it! That *includes* the unborn one!"

In a flash, he was wearing a tie and standing in front of a map of Equestria.

"Now for the weather! Today's forecast is cotton candy cloudy with a chance of chocolate milk! You know what? Might even be raining cats and dogs! Hope every pony gets home safely!"

With a final triumphant laugh, the draconequus disappeared and lightening struck indoors. The crowd glanced outside as it started to rain chocolate cats and dogs. Every pony screamed and ran out of the ballroom in panic.

"Every pony!" Twilight commanded. "Calm down! Everything is under control!"

No pony listened and they started flocking outside.

"Keep it together! Stay inside until further notice! I..."

But the crowd took their chances and hurried home through the chocolate storm. Even the Wonderbolts dashed out of there in fear. Only the orphans, Shining Armor, the palace guards, the princess and her friends remained.

"Applejack, Rainbow Dash!" Twilight shouted. "Get the orphans down to the cellar! They can stay there until the storm blows over. It's not safe for them to return to the orphanage."

"Copy that," Rainbow saluted as she and Applejack began escorting the frightened fillies and colts out.

"Fluttershy, you keep an eye on Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo. Don't let them out of your sight."

The pegasus nodded. She was scared out of her wits, but she was willing to protect those three at all costs.

"I'll round up the guards to help all the citizens of Canterlot get inside," Shining Armor volunteered.

"Good idea, Shining Armor," Twilight said. "We'll rendezvous in the throne room in an hour! The most important thing to do now is to keep calm!"

As every pony set on their tasks, Twilight hung her head. How could she have let this happen? Equestria was in peril because she had not been prepared. Even if she did have the Elements of Harmony, she could not power them without her horn. *Some princess I've turned out to be.*

Credit for the lyrics of "Somebody to Love" goes to Queen and "Pinkielicious" to BlackGryp0n on YouTube (couldn't resist).

Oh, and...dun dun DUN!

The Proposition

There were many directions I could have gone with this chapter and the last. I hope the one I took is satisfying enough.

Discord continued to spread his chaos across Equestria. He turned the railroads into red licorice, the buffalos into gymnasts, the trees into candy canes and the birds into oranges. The last one was thanks to Twilight Sparkle. He then switched from night to day every few minutes so he could see his work. He saved Ponyville for last.

"Hmm, let's see," he murmured to himself as he hovered over the unsuspecting town. "What to do? What to do?"

He paused when he heard laughter. He glanced down and saw two ponies having a picnic under a gazebo. He recognized them as Applejack's older brother and the local school teacher. The stallion was wearing a bowtie and dinner jacket, while the mare was wearing a pretty pink dress. Discord perched himself on a cloud and watched.

"It was nice of you to plan a picnic, Big Mac," said Cheerilee.

"Yup," her date nodded.

The draconequus had to duck as she looked up at the sky. "Beautiful night, isn't it?"

Big Macintosh looked in her direction. "Yup."

Discord rolled his eyes. "Come on, boy! You can say more words than that!"

Suddenly, a smaller version of himself with devil horns and a pitchfork appeared on his shoulder.

"What are you waiting for? They're having a lovely date. Ruin it!"

He nodded and snapped his fingers. Below, Big Macintosh let out a loud burp. He blushed in embarrassment.

"Pardon."

She's going to dump him now, the draconequus thought, chuckling to himself.

But instead, she giggled. " *Someone's* had too much champagne."

Discord was confused, but tried something else. As Cheerilee took a sip of her drink, he snapped his fingers, causing her to spit the champagne into Big Mac's face. *Maybe he will dump her now!*

Cheerilee smiled awkwardly. "Sorry. Looks like *I've* had too much as well."

They stared at each other and both laughed. Discord was beginning to get annoyed. He summoned up a storm of cotton candy clouds and made them rain chocolate milk on the couple.

"Strange," Cheerilee said. "There wasn't a cloud in the sky a minute ago."

She yelped as a bolt of lightning almost struck her. Her clothes and mane were getting drenched in chocolate milk. Big Macintosh ripped his jacket off and threw it over her shoulders. The two ran toward the barn and huddled inside with the farm animals.

Cheerilee began taking off the jacket, but Big Mac stopped her with his hoof and shook his head.

"Thank you, Big Mac," she said with a smile. She then glanced at the storm outside. "Wow, what dumb luck, huh?"

"Yup."

They laughed and rubbed their noses together. Discord slammed his paw on his cloud.

"I don't get it!" he shouted. "I humiliated them, made it rain on their picnic and they're *still* happy?!"

"Sickening, isn't it?" his shoulder devil gagged.

He stared down at the couple as they settled in an embrace and looked into each other's eyes. He let out a longing sigh. "Yeah. Sickening."

"You don't sound so convinced."

"Why do you suppose no pony's looked at us that way?"

"We're too magnificent for such sap!"

"Hey, why am I even talking to you when there are ponies to hear me gloat?"

He kicked his small self away and steered the cloud towards Canterlot.

Twilight paced around the throne room. "How could I have let this happen?"

"You've been asking yourself that for the past hour!" Spike complained. "This isn't your fault, Twilight."

"Yes, it is! Princess Celestia trusted me with running the kingdom and look at what's happened because of that!"

"It's Discord's fault, darling," Rarity said. "Not yours."

"Yeah!" Pinkie Pie agreed. "It's his fault there're yummy delicious chocolate cats and dogs raining all over the place without a single dollop of whipped cream to be seen anywhere in sight!"

"Pinkie, isn't that chocolate all over your face?"

She used her tongue to lick away the incriminating substance. "Nope."

Rarity rolled her eyes and turned to Fluttershy. "You were right all along, sweetie. I'm sorry we didn't listen to you."

"It's alright," Fluttershy assured them.

Rainbow and Applejack entered the throne room.

"Okay," the latter said. "All the orphans are safe underground. The palace servants are bringin' cakes to calm 'em down."

Shining Armor appeared behind them. "It's not looking good out there, girls. The streets have been turned to lard. We already have twelve ponies hospitalized, and that's just from slipping on the street! Don't get me started on how many are getting hit over the head by the chocolate cats and dogs!"

"We gotta stop that big bully!" Apple Bloom exclaimed.

"I know," Twilight said, "but we can't use the Elements of Harmony without my magic."

"What if Fluttershy gives Discord that Stare of hers?" Scootaloo suggested.

"I don't know if that'll work on him," Fluttershy said quietly. She was still shocked from the experience of being in his arms.

"It worked on a cockatrice, didn't it?" said Sweetie Belle.

"I say we give him a good punch in the face!" Rainbow shouted.

"And what good would that do?" Applejack inquired. "Even if you did manage to hurt him, he could just heal himself with his magic. Twilight, what do you think we should do?"

The princess buried her face in her hooves. "I don't know! I just don't know!"

Every pony gasped as a familiar laugh echoed throughout the room. "Giving up so soon, Twilight Sparkle? That's oddly out of character for you."

"Show yourself, coward!" Shining Armor demanded. "If you don't give me back my wife, I'll...!"

"You'll what, Princie? How come *you* didn't get a pair of wings like your sister?"

"Knock it off!" Rainbow shouted, putting up her hooves. "Come out and fight, you chicken!"

She jumped as Discord tapped her on the back.

"Chicken, huh?" He looked at his claw. "You might be partially right about that."

Rainbow grounded her teeth together and charged at him. Discord teleported himself to the other side of the room, allowing the pegasus to crash into a window. Fortunately, the stain glass was strong and did not shatter.

"Dear, dear, Rainbow Dash," Discord said, shaking his head. "Must it always be violence with you?"

Twilight stood defiantly and stomped her hoof. "Enough of your gloating, Discord!"

"Who's gloating? I'm mocking! But if gloating's what you want..." He snapped his fingers and turned the floor into wax, causing every pony to slip. "Look at how helpful I am! I've waxed the floor for you!"

"What is with you and trippin' ponies?" Applejack demanded.

"Cut it out, ya big bully!" Apple Bloom hollered.

"Yeah!" Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo shouted in agreement.

The draconequus stooped to their level. "Bully? Oh, that's coming from the pony who bullied her own cousin!"

"Hey!" Applejack attempted to get up, but slipped again. "You leave my sister and her friends alone!"

"Friends? Hmm, interesting choice of words, considering it was their quarrel that got me out of that prison block in the first place!"

"W-what?" Sweetie Belle stuttered.

"Don't you remember your little class trip?"

"You mean...?" Scootaloo stammered. "You...you were the statue?"

He clapped his hands, which made a different sound every time. "Give the little pony a prize! And let me thank the three of you! I would have never taken over Equestria without your help!"

Fluttershy had had enough. She flew off the wax floor and into the creature's face.

"How dare you?! You think you can intimidate poor, defenseless fillies and get away with it?!"

Discord's eyes widened at her sudden boldness. "Excuse me?"

She poked his nose with her hoof. "You best watch your step, buster, or I'll give you...the Stare!"

"The what?"

"Yeah!" Scootaloo cheered. "You're in for it now, buddy!"

"Ooh, I'm so scared," he said sarcastically.

Suddenly, Fluttershy opened her eyes wide and it was like some beam shot out of them. Discord seemed locked in that gaze for a moment and then burst out laughing. Fluttershy looked at her hooves in surprise.

"But...that should have..."

She squeaked as he grabbed her and rubbed her mane playfully. "Oh, you're *hilarious*, my dear! Some pony's certainly gotten braver in the past few years."

"I warned you, punk!" Rainbow cried, going in for the kill.

Discord teleported out of the way, dropping Fluttershy in the process.

"Stop it, Discord!" Twilight commanded. "Why are you here?"

He appeared behind her. "I'm here to negotiate."

She turned to him. "Negotiate?"

"Listen, we all know you want harmony in your kingdom and your princesses safe and yada, yada, yada; and I don't want to be turned back to stone. So...why don't we make a deal?"

"This isn't another one of your games, is it?" Rainbow demanded.

"Ooh, I love games!" Pinkie Pie chimed.

"Gosh, no!" He summoned up a white flag. "I just want to talk!"

"What about?" Twilight asked suspiciously.

"You want me to stop wreaking havoc on Equestria. I simply want something in return."

"How about your life?"

"That was going to be one of the things..."

"You give us back the princesses and turn everything back to normal or we'll..."

"Turn me back to stone?" He pointed to her head. "Can't do that without a horn!"

Angry, Shining Armor shot a beam at him. Discord dodged it by teleporting to the door in a huff.

"Typical of you ponies! Here I come bearing the white flag and all you can think about is violence! Elements of Harmony indeed!"

"Get out!" Rainbow shouted.

"You're not wanted here!" Twilight bellowed.

Fluttershy had been watching the entire scene with uncertainty. She did not trust Discord, but her friends were not giving him a chance to talk. With this in mind, she made a bold move and flew between Discord and her friends.

"Twilight!" she exclaimed. "I'm surprised at you! You of all ponies!"

"Fluttershy," Twilight said slowly.

"Aren't you the one who says we should put reason before judgment? Discord may be an evil monster who doesn't deserve our trust..."

"I'm right here, you know!" the draconequus waved.

"But we should at least give him a chance to explain himself!"

Everyone was surprised at her action. Discord was the most confused, but the fact that she seemed to be defending him caused him to smile evilly.

"Well said, my dear."

She tensed as he teasingly stroked her mane. Frightened and frustrated, she swatted his paw away and flew to Twilight's side.

"You are right," her friend said, before turning to their enemy. "What are your demands, Discord?"

The draconequus grinned and floated leisurely onto his back. "The way I see it, you want three things from me: your horn, order in your land, and your princesses. Actually, that last one counts for three, four if you include the unborn infant, but never mind that. Anyway, I simply want three things in return."

"My, my, my," said Rarity. "Aren't we needy?"

Twilight sighed. "What is it you want?"

"For your horn," Discord began, "you will have to make a promise never to use your Elements of Harmony against me."

"What?!" Rainbow exclaimed. "Why would we make a deal like that?"

"You want Princess Prissy to get her horn back, don't you?"

"It's a trick, I tell you!"

"Tell you what. If any pony fails to keep their end of the bargain, anything goes. Meaning if I go back on my promise, you may do with the Elements what you will."

The purple pony scowled, but remained calm. "And the other things?"

"If I were to release Equestria of my chaos, well, I would be quite bored. After all, it is in my nature to create disharmony. All I'm asking is a teensy bit of land where I am free to spread my glorious chaos undisturbed."

Twilight nodded. "That might be possible."

"What about Cadence?" Shining Armor demanded. "What will it take to get her back?"

"Give me a moment!" Discord said, tapping his chin.

"You mean you don't know?" Spike questioned.

"I'm thinking!"

And he was. He had considered the first two requests very carefully, but the third had him stumped. He had to make this last one good. He thought about what he would need in his new life. If he was to abandon his hostile takeover, what would he do then? Return to his empty cave and talk to copies of him? Even if he was allowed to continue his chaos, there was no point in it if he had no one to share it with, let alone show it to.

His mind then wandered to the couple he had encountered a few minutes earlier. The way they had held each other, talked to each other, looked at each other; he would never admit it aloud that he wanted that. Then it struck him.

"Well?" Twilight asked impatiently.

He grinned mischievously. "Okay, I know what I want now! Trust me. This is the best deal you're going to get! It's a three for one deal."

"Huh?" Pinkie Pie uttered.

"Applejack, you're a sales pony. You understand, don't you?"

"Uh," the southern pony muttered. "Three for one means three for the price of one, but I don't..."

"Precisely! I will give you three mares for the price of one mare! We'll call the unborn filly a bonus."

Silence fell on the ponies. Twilight was the first to break it.

"What do you mean by the price of one mare?"

Discord's grin widened. "What I'm asking for is a bride."

"A *what* ?!"

He knocked her on the head. "Hello? Any pony in there? I said I want a bride in exchange for your princesses."

"A *bride* ?!" Rarity exclaimed. "What would you do with a bride?"

"I'd marry her of course. You know, spend eternity together, maybe have a few brats, err, kids..."

"You'd make a terrible dad!" Sweetie Belle cried.

"Oh, shut up."

He snapped his fingers and zipped the young unicorn's mouth closed. Her older sister gasped and opened the zipper with a glare.

"Explain your reasons behind this, Discord," Twilight said calmly.

"What?" he shrugged innocently. "Being a creature of chaos tends to be a lonely occupation."

"Whose fault is that?" Rainbow Dash mumbled.

"It's only natural that I would feel the need for companionship. Besides, if I'm going to retire, I might as well settle down and raise a family and blah, blah, blah."

"And," Twilight gulped, "this...bride...has to be a...pony?"

"Yes, so don't try and trick me and give a snail or rabbit or something! Doesn't matter what pony it is. I have no preferences, except one. She has to come willingly. That means no forcing, no bribing, and no swindling! She must come out of her own free will."

Rarity scoffed. "Who would be willing to marry *you* ?!"

"I don't know. Any of you mares interested?"

They all glared at him. Rainbow stuck her tongue out.

"No pony?" He looked over at the yellow pegasus. "What about you, Fluttershy?"

She let out a small whimper. Before she could say anything, Twilight moved between them.

"Get out," she said between her teeth.

Discord shrugged. "I'm a reasonable creature. Perhaps you need some time to think about it. There's a cave up in the mountains. When you want to talk, look for me there."

On that note, he vanished from the room.

I know, not everybody's a fan of the whole CheerileeXBig Mac thing. I just thought it would be cute if they were the couple I used.

The Dilemma

Not really much to say about this chapter, except I hope no one's out of character.

"We're not really going to give into his demands, are we?" Rarity asked.

They had left the waxy throne room to continue their meeting in the map room.

"We may not have a choice," Twilight said. "Discord thought this out very well. I need my horn to power the Elements, but the only way I can get it back is if we don't use the Elements to stop him. Finding a piece of land with no ponies around will not be difficult."

"What about the third deal?" Applejack inquired.

She sighed. "Discord knows how desperate we are to get the princesses back."

"But we can't just hand some pony over to be his wife!" Rarity exclaimed. "We might as well be making a sacrifice to the Devil!"

"He said his bride has to go willingly. I think we should announce this to the citizens and see if any pony is willing to make such a sacrifice."

Fluttershy had been silent the entire time. She couldn't get over the fact that Discord had been there. The way he had spoken to her, touched her, looked at her, it gave her the shivers. She told herself she was being paranoid, but if that was the case, why did he seem to single her out?

"We should at least accept the terms of the first two," Twilight decided. "If I had my magic, we could be able to find another solution, and it would be easier to think if there weren't pigs flying

outside."

Every pony nodded in agreement.

"What about Cadence?" Shining Armor asked. "And our daughter?"

"I want her back too, Shining Armor," his sister assured him, "but to sacrifice one of our own..."

"I don't like the idea either, but...Discord has a point. Instead of losing four, we would only lose one. And...I don't know how long Cadence will last."

"She's strong. No matter what her conditions, she's always been able to pull through. Celestia and Luna will be strong too. Wherever they are, I'm sure they are holding out."

"You want to *get married* ?!" Luna scoffed after Discord had told them his plan. "Who in the world would want to marry *you* ?"

"Go ahead, laugh!" Discord said, rolling his eyes. "Just thought you would want to know what your lives are going to cost."

"You will never get away with this, Discord!" Celestia bellowed.

"Yes, yes. The whole 'you will never get away this' speech. I will respond with the usual comeback: 'oh, but I will!' Any other cliché's you would like to point out, Celestia?"

"Just you wait until Shining Armor gets here!" Cadence snapped.

"You mean Prince Good-for-Nothing who always needs his baby sister to come in and save the day?"

She growled and lashed her hooves through the bars of the cage. Discord simply laughed.

"Oh, you three are just *too* amusing! Either of *you* willing to save the others and accept my proposal?"

Luna spat at him while Celestia shouted, "Never!"

"And I'm already married, creep!" Cadence barked.

"Hey, just asking," Discord said innocently.

A voice called from outside the cave. "Discord!"

The draconequus turned. "Oh, would you look at that? Sorry to leave you, girls, but I have a meeting."

With a wave of his paw, the cage vanished and he went to meet his visitor. Twilight Sparkle and her five companions were standing at the entrance.

"Ah, my old friends! Have you made your decision already?"

"Yes," Twilight said defiantly.

She turned her head and nodded. Spike emerged from behind her, bearing a jewel encrusted case. He hesitantly stepped forward and placed the box in front of the draconequus.

"We accept your terms and promise never to use our Elements of Harmony against you. And to show you that we are serious about this..."

Spike opened the case to reveal the five necklaces and crown inside. Discord raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Appreciate the gesture, but keep them. I don't want those things anywhere near me."

He shoved the case with his foot and then backed away as if it were on fire.

"What about my piece of land?"

"The castle ruins in the Everfree forest," Twilight stated. "You may do with them what you like."

"And no pony will disturb me?"

"No pony, as long as you confine your mischief within that area."

"And that area would be?"

"Marked by the rope bridge."

Discord clapped his hands. "Excellent! But...who's the lucky mare I'm marrying?"

Twilight glanced away.

"Well?"

"If you think we're going to send some pony to marry the likes of you..."

"You want your princesses back, you give me what I want!" He sighed. "But I am a creature of my word."

He snapped his fingers, blinding every pony with a white flash. When the light was gone, Twilight's horn was back on her head and the chaos from outside had ceased.

"I have all the time in the world to wait," Discord said nonchalantly. "The princesses, however..."

"We'll give you anything!" Twilight pleaded. "Just please, don't hurt them!"

"I told you. When my demands are met, they go free. Why not save us all some time and give yourself up?"

"Who are you talking to?" Rainbow demanded.

"Any of you. I don't care which one, but if some pony doesn't come forward soon, I will just have to make the decision myself. How about I give you...?" He tapped his chin. "Three days?"

"Isn't there anything else you want?" Twilight beseeched.

"Look, it's a bride or no deal! Got that?"

"But..."

"I think we're done here."

He zapped himself out of the cave, leaving the distressed ponies behind.

"He wouldn't accept anything else?" Shining Armor asked.

"He'll take a bride and nothing but," Twilight replied solemnly.

They had announced Discord's request to Canterlot that morning. So far, no pony was willing to accept such a fate.

"What do we do now?" Applejack wondered.

Twilight sighed. "We made a promise not to use the Elements against him, and if we break it, he's free to do whatever he likes."

"Unless we blast him before he does anything!" Rainbow suggested.

"He's the only one who knows where the princesses are. If we turn him to stone, we may never get them back."

"Why haven't they tried contacting us?" Scootaloo inquired. "I mean Celestia sends you messages through Spike and Luna can enter dreams!"

"Neither of them have their horns. Which means..." Realization hit her. "They can't raise the sun or moon! Even without Discord's chaos, order in Equestria will not stand without them! Without the sun, none of the crops will grow, and who knows how long the moon and stars will stay out without Luna's magic? We could be facing eternal darkness!"

"What about you?" Sweetie Belle asked. "Aren't you a princess now?"

"I can't raise the *sun* ! Do you know how powerful you have to be to accomplish that?! I just...I just..."

Tears streamed down her cheeks. Shining Armor put an assuring

hoof on her.

"Don't worry. We'll get them back. We'll get them *all* back. We just have to solve this dilemma." He looked toward the others. "I know no pony wants to spend eternity with that...that monster, but we got to think..."

"I should go."

Every pony stared at Twilight.

"This all happened while Equestria was under my rule. I should put the well-being of my subjects before myself."

"I won't allow it!" her brother insisted.

"But Cadence..."

"Would not stand for it. I want her back as much as you do, but I don't want to lose my little sister in the process."

"For the sake of my friends," Rarity declared, "I believe I should go."

"No!" Sweetie Belle cried, hanging onto her leg. "I need you, big sister! And what'll Mom and Dad say?"

Applejack took off her hat. "I should go."

"Don't even think about it!" Apple Bloom commanded. "We need you at Sweet Apple Acres! The orphans need you too!"

"Me then?" Rainbow questioned.

A desperate hug from Scootaloo dismissed the idea.

"What about me?" Pinkie asked seriously, which was out of character for her. "I mean I already like his chocolate milk rain."

"That may be the case, Pinkie," Rainbow said, "but come on... *you* married?!"

As the others argued, Fluttershy dealt with an internal argument of her own. She did not dare say her thoughts aloud, knowing her

friends would just dismiss them. They all had reasons for staying behind: responsibilities, family. What did she have? There were her animals and friends, but what happiness would she bring them if they were to live in darkness for the rest of their lives? What happiness would she bring them if she left?

Every pony quieted down as Applejack leapt onto the chart table. "Look, it's been a long night for all of us. I say we get some sleep and see what can be done tomorrow."

They all agreed and retired to their rooms.

It was happening again. It was dark, and she was in his arms. His lion fingers were running through her mane. Even though she knew this was a dream, it sent chills up her spine.

"Why won't you go away?" she squeaked.

Her captor's cackle echoed in the darkness. "My dear, don't you understand? I'm in your mind because you keep me here."

"Well, I don't want you here! Go away!"

He chuckled and soon his face was inches away from hers. "What are you waiting for, my dear? You know what you have to do. You know I favor you over the others. So do it."

"No!" She tried to struggle out of his grasp. "I don't...I don't..."

He whispered into her ear. "If you don't do it, who will?"

Fluttershy woke with a start. She put her hoof to her head and whimpered. *I can't do it, she thought. I just can't! What will the others think?*

She could not go back to sleep, so she went down to the kitchen to get a snack. She screamed when she bumped into someone, causing them to fall and drop a tray of food.

"What in tarnation? Fluttershy?"

The pegasus squinted at the pony on the floor and gasped. "Oh, Applejack, I'm so sorry! You startled me."

The southern pony rubbed her head as she got up. "It's okay. I'm guessin' you couldn't sleep either, huh?" She shook her head. "Nightmare again?"

She nodded. "It was different this time. He spoke to me. He was... he was..."

"Calm down. Tell you what. After I clean this up, I'll make us both some apples and peanut butter. Sound good?"

Fluttershy sniffed and nodded with a smile. As they ate, she told Applejack about her dream. Her friend listened intently.

"You're lettin' his threat on the princesses get to you. Don't worry. We'll figure somethin' out."

The pegasus looked down at her hooves. "Applejack, can I tell you a secret?"

The cowgirl sighed. "Fluttershy, you know how bad I am at keepin' secrets. With me bein' the Element of Honesty and all, I'm a terrible liar."

"You don't have to lie. Just don't mention it to any pony."

"Okay, but...why me?"

"Well, it's a very shocking secret. Twilight would be against it, Rarity would overreact, Rainbow Dash would tell me it's a bad idea and Pinkie Pie...well..."

"Alright, I get it. So what's this secret?"

"First, you've got to promise not to tell any pony, and not to freak out."

"I promise."

"Pinkie Promise?"

She sighed. "Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye."

Fluttershy glanced around and then gestured for her to come closer.

"I'm...thinking of..." The rest was inaudible.

"Come again?"

"I'm..." This time was quieter.

"Didn't hear ya."

"I'm thinking of going with Discord!" she shouted.

Applejack choked on her apple. " *What ?!*"

"You said you wouldn't freak out!"

"I had no idea you were...!" Then she stopped and took a breath.

"You're right, I promised I wouldn't. But still! How could you even consider goin' with that monster?!"

"If I don't go, who will?"

"Fluttershy, do you hear yourself?!"

"We need Princesses Celestia and Luna to bring day and night and Cadence is with child. Discord won't let them go unless some pony takes their place. I think that pony should be me."

"No, you shouldn't! You can't! I'd rather go instead of you!"

"But you have your family to take care of, and the orphans, they look up to you. Twilight has her crown and Shining Armor, Rarity has her shop and Sweetie Belle, Rainbow Dash is a Wonderbolt, and Pinkie Pie has her job at Sugar Cube Corner and to make every pony smile. I have no pony, no purpose."

"What are you talkin' about? Of course you have a purpose! The animals back in Ponyville depend on you!"

"Some pony else can take care of them."

"And don't think you haven't any pony!" She put a hoof around her. "You've got a lot of friends who would be heartbroken if you left!"

"But suppose no pony agrees to marry Discord? Would all the ponies and animals be better off then?"

Applejack paused. "Well...I..."

"What if my dreams are a sign? What if this is my fate?"

"Fluttershy, your fate is not to be unhappy for the rest of your life tied to that creature!"

"Why not?!" she snapped. "Can't you see that no matter what I'll choose, I'll always be unhappy?!"

"You don't really believe that, do you?"

The pegasus buried her face in her hooves. "I don't know! I just don't know!"

Applejack patted her on the back. "I think we should talk to Twilight."

Her head shot up. "No! You Pinkie Promised!"

"But she'll know what to do!"

"No! She'll just say it's a bad idea!"

"Okay, but hear me out. I don't like this decision you're makin', but we should at least ask some pony for advice, some pony with unbiased judgment."

"Who?"

Applejack thought for a moment and then lit up. "Zecora! She always has good advice! Maybe she can help!"

"You mean," Fluttershy gulped, "I'll have to go to...the Everfree Forest?!"

"Don't worry. I'll come with you. Look, I don't know if it'll do us any good, but it's worth a shot."

The pegasus looked up at her friend and nodded. "Okay."

Next chapter: Zecora!

The Decision

Zecora is fun to write, because of her rhyming. Oh, if any of you have read *Bride of the Lindorm King* , just know that this is not *entirely* based on that. Part of this was also inspired by an episode in my favorite TV show *Once Upon a Time* .

"I hope we don't run into any Timberwolves," Fluttershy quivered as she and her friend trudged through the Everfree forest.

"Don't worry," Applejack assured her. "If we come across those critters, I'll take care of 'em."

They approached the zebra's tree and knocked on the door.

"Who is coming to say hi?" Zecora asked as she opened the door. "Why, it's dear Applejack and Fluttershy. Won't you come in with me and have some tea?"

She poured them both a cup of tea, which eased their nerves a bit.

"It is wonderful to see your face, now what brings you here to my place?"

Fluttershy was too nervous to speak, so Applejack explained for her. "As you may have noticed, Discord's back."

The zebra narrowed her eyes and stomped her hoof on the table. "I am fully aware that creature's in town, when I came to find my hut upside-down!"

The southern pony glanced around at the mess of broken bottles and turned over furniture. "Yeah, I can see that. I'm sure you heard of his...demands?"

Zecora nodded. "News in Equestria travels fast, that it just so happened to have passed my ear that Discord has said...he would

like a mare to wed?"

"That is correct."

"And if he doesn't get a bride by tomorrow, he'll hurt the princesses," Fluttershy added, fiddling with her cup. "And I...well..."

Applejack finished. "Fluttershy's thinkin' of being that mare."

Zecora looked at the pegasus with wide eyes. "Is that so? You wish to go?"

"Yes," she muttered. "No. Maybe? Oh, I don't know!"

"I keep urgin' her not to," Applejack said, "but she thinks she's the only one who can do it! That's why I brought her here, Zecora, so you can talk some sense into her."

"Perhaps I can help lift your spirits up," Zecora said, holding out her hoof, "but first, I will need your tea-cup."

Fluttershy handed her empty cup and the zebra studied the tea leaves carefully. "For such a long time, I see, you have been most unhappy." The pegasus hung her head. "You are haunted by your fear, the very creature that brings you here."

"You can tell all that from her tea-cup?" Applejack marveled.

"But look!" Zecora showed the cup to Fluttershy and pointed to a picture of the sun that was made by the leaves. "In your future, I also see great happiness, and this is if you go with the draconequus."

"What?!" The southern pony grabbed the tea-cup. "How could she possibly be happy with Discord?!"

"He may not be an angel from above, but perhaps all Discord needs is some love."

"Love?! That varmint? Now I *know* you're makin' this up!"

"You mean..." Fluttershy stammered. "He just wants some pony to

love him?"

Zecora shrugged. "I could be mistaken, but I assure you if this path were taken, no harm will be brought upon you. Yet it could be that Discord is unhappy too."

"I hadn't thought about that."

Applejack slammed her hoof. "Because there's no way in the wide world of Equestria that a creature like him could ever...!"

"Do you not remember what you thought of me," Zecora interrupted, "when you came crashing through my tree? Were not your judgments of me wrong, yours and that of the massive throng?"

"That...that was different! We didn't know you then! But Discord... he's terrible! Do you know what he did to us? What he did to Fluttershy? What he's gonna do to the princesses?"

Zecora waved her words away and smiled at Fluttershy. "The key to happiness is to show kindness."

The pegasus looked at the zebra's assuring face and grinned slightly.

"Now, Applejack, shall we see what is in your tea?" She peered over at her cup.

"I'll pass, thank you," the southern pony said.

"Really? You do not want help alike on your conflicting emotions for Spike?"

"How did you...?" Applejack blushed. "I mean...I told ya coming here was a waste of time! Come on, Fluttershy!"

As the pegasus followed her friend out the door, she turned back to the zebra.

"Tell me, Zecora. Is what you said...about Discord...true?"

"Perhaps, perhaps not," she replied coolly. "But perhaps it's worth a

shot."

Fluttershy nodded in thanks and stepped outside. The two friends were quiet on their stroll back, until Fluttershy recognized a certain part of the wood. Abruptly, she flew down a path and Applejack raced after her.

"Fluttershy, what are you...?"

Then they stopped at a gorge, a rickety rope bridge hanging in front of them. One the other side was a dark floating castle. Discord had obviously fixed up the ruins and made himself at home. Fluttershy stared at it in wonder. If she made this decision, this was where she would spend the rest of her days.

"We should get out of here," Applejack whispered.

Her friend nodded and followed her back.

"Fluttershy," the southern pony said seriously, "I know what you're thinking, but you *can't* do it."

"You don't suppose Zecora was lying?" Fluttershy asked.

"I'm not calling Zecora a liar. It's Discord I don't trust."

"What if she's right? What if Discord just wants some pony to love? I mean why else would he ask for a bride? All those years, I bet he's never even had a friend."

"Well, he should have thought about that before he took over Equestria and messed up every pony's lives!"

"Applejack, some pony has to go with him. What choice do I have?"

"There are plenty of ponies in Equestria! It doesn't have to be you!"

"But how many do you think would be willing to go?"

"I...well..."

"This is my choice, Applejack. I can take care of myself."

"I *know* you can, Sugar Cube. I've seen you face up to a manticore and a full-grown dragon. But Discord..." She sighed. "Look, I just don't want you to get hurt, and I know the others don't wanna lose you to that..."

"If I *don't* go, the sun may never rise again and Cadence's baby will never be born. Applejack, it's either me, or all of Equestria."

Applejack stared up at her friend with blurry eyes and then hung her head. "If this is your decision, Sugar Cube, I'm not gonna stop ya, but...you do realize I'll have to tell the others what you did, right? I'm sorry."

"No, they have a right to know."

"Just...promise me this. If no pony else comes forth by tomorrow, then...you may do what you wish."

Fluttershy embraced her friend. "I knew you'd understand, Applejack." When she pulled away, she smiled smugly. "So what's this about you and Spike?"

Applejack turned red. "It's nothin'! Really! It's a school pony crush, nothin' more!"

"When did this happen?"

"When he saved me from those Timberwolves last year, but it's been goin' on and off. It's kinda embarrassin'. Ya can't tell any pony, or any dragon, ya hear?!"

Fluttershy giggled. "Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye."

"Was Zecora of any help?" Twilight asked the two once they had returned to Canterlot.

Applejack hesitated. They had told her they were visiting Zecora, but they had not given the details.

"She, um, gave some advice. Has any pony come forth yet?"

The alicorn shook her head. "No. I've tried to find the princesses using divination spells, but I've had no luck so far."

Fluttershy said nothing and headed towards her room. Applejack caught up with her before she could close the door.

"Fluttershy," she called, "whatever you choose, I just want you to know..."

She turned to her. "Yes?"

"You...you just might be the bravest pony I've ever known."

Fluttershy smiled, knowing that it was always the truth with her. "That really means a lot to me, Applejack."

That night, she dreamt of Discord, and the words that Zecora had spoken: *He may not be an angel from above, but perhaps all Discord needs is some love.* The words soothed her. The more she thought about it, the less worried she was. She was still terrified, though not as much as before. She liked to think it was all true. What if Discord was just a creature that needed to be tamed, like the mantichore and the dragon?

Even if Zecora hadn't been right, some pony needed to go. So when Fluttershy awoke that morning, she knew exactly what she needed to do.

Twilight gazed out her window. The sun hadn't risen in three days and the stars and moon were starting to fade. It would soon be nothing but darkness, and the deadline was near.

A cry from Rainbow Dash interrupted her thoughts. "Twilight! Twilight! You've got to come, quickly!"

"What is it?" the princess demanded.

"It's Fluttershy, she's gone!"

Twilight didn't waste a second and followed the pegasus to Fluttershy's room. Rarity, Pinkie, Applejack and Spike surrounded the empty bed. The dragon held a note in his claws. The alicorn removed it with her magic and read it aloud:

" Dear friends, I am very sorry, but this is the only way. Do not come after me. This was my choice. Applejack will explain. Please, take care of my animals, especially Angel. Tell them I'm sorry. Love, Fluttershy. "

Every pony turned suspiciously towards Applejack.

"Do you know anything about this?" Twilight asked.

The cowgirl stomped her hoof. "She did it! She gone and did it! I tried to talk her out of it, I really did! She made me Pinkie Promise not to tell y'all before she did it!"

"Calm down, Applejack. What happened?"

She took a deep breath and looked up at them with tears in her eyes.

Fluttershy stood at the cave entrance. A part of her was telling her to turn back, but another was telling her to go in. She had to do this for her friends, for the princesses, for Equestria. She inhaled deeply and walked in.

It was dark, but that's not what frightened her. She had the feeling that he was going to jump out at any moment. *Stop it, Fluttershy*, she told herself. *You need to be brave.*

"Hello?" she called out weakly. "Anyone home?"

"Well, well, well."

She yelped in surprise and spun around to find the draconequus standing over her.

"If it isn't the Element of Kindness herself? How nice of you to drop in!"

Suddenly, the ground beneath her disappeared and Fluttershy screamed as she fell through a hole. She landed with a thump and looked around to find that she had landed in the same spot that she had fallen.

"How did...?" she stammered.

Discord laughed maniacally. "Oh, that was priceless!" He wiped away a tear. "So what brings you here, my dear? Come to 'negotiate' some more?"

Fluttershy struggled to stand, as her knees were shaking. "Well, I have come to negotiate something..."

"Strange that Twilight would send *you* to try to reason with me. Well, you can tell your *precious* princess that I will only take a bride and that's final!"

"And a bride you shall have!"

Discord stared at her, shocked at her sudden outburst. "Is that so? Well, where is the lucky mare?"

Her teeth started chattering. "R-right...h-here."

He blinked. "Say again?"

Fluttershy closed her eyes and straightened up. "I will be your bride."

For a long while, there was silence and she opened her eyes to see his face full of confusion. Then he erupted into a roar of laughter.

"Oh, I get it! This is a joke, right? Alright, who put you up to this? Twilight? Maybe that prankster Pinkie Pie?" She did not respond. "Rainbow Dash?"

"They...don't even know I'm here. Well, they should by now. I left them a note."

"Why would you leave them a...?" His laughter faded as he studied the pony's face. "You're... *serious* about this?" She nodded solemnly. " *You ?*"

He would have never expected *her* , the pegasus afraid of her own shadow, to accept his offer. Actually, he was beginning to think no pony would come forth at all.

"Y-yes," she squeaked.

"And *no pony* put you up to this?"

She shook her head. "This was my decision. But..." She backed away nervously. "If you'd rather have some pony else..."

"Now hold on!" She jumped as he appeared behind her. "I didn't say I wasn't interested."

He circled her, studying her carefully from every angle. Fluttershy shut her eyes and stood still, her heart racing. She flinched as he sniffed at her mane, but tried not to react.

Discord had to admit, for a pony, she wasn't that bad to look at. Her silky pink mane was well-groomed and smelled of roses, her big teal eyes, though closed now, were almost adorable, and her voice was sweet as honey. This must have been a trick of some sort. There was no way this pony could have come out of her own free will, but he knew she wasn't a trickster. Besides, when was he going to get another chance like this?

"You'll do," he said with indifference. "But are you certain this is what you want, my dear? Remember, if you agree to this, there is no going back."

Fluttershy looked up at him boldly. "If I were to go with you, you will keep your promise and let the princesses go?"

"My dear," he said with a bow, "you have my word."

"And...my friends?"

"Will never hear from me again."

She gulped. "Nor me?"

He stooped down to her, his face just inches from hers. "Think of it this way. You could either spend eternity living comfortably at my estate, catered to your every need, or you could spend the rest of your short life in a world of darkness."

"Catered to my every need?"

"If we are to be married, what's mine is yours. If it is in my power, I shall give you whatever you desire. Call it incentive."

She could not tell if he was serious. Being offered whatever she desired did sound tempting, but why would he do that for her? Perhaps Zecora was right. Maybe he was desperate for a companion.

Seeing that he was getting to her, he placed his hands on her shoulders. "So what'll it be, my dear?"

It didn't matter. Equestria needed the princesses returned. She breathed in.

"I'll marry you."

"Excellent!" He leapt excitedly into the air.

"Now where are the princesses?"

Instead of answering, he smirked. "Why don't we make it official?"

He snapped his fingers and a box materialized in his paw. He opened it to reveal a sparkling diamond ring.

"Oh dear," Fluttershy muttered.

He chuckled. "I'll ask again. Will you marry me, my dear Fluttershy?"

"Fluttershy, don't!"

The pegasus turned to see Twilight racing towards them, the others running behind.

"You keep away from her, creep!" cried Rainbow, her face filled with blood lust.

Discord stopped them all with his magic. "Do you mind? I'm in the middle of a proposal here!"

"Put them down!" Fluttershy begged. "Please, just let me say goodbye to them!"

He rolled his eyes and released them from his spell. Fluttershy rushed to Twilight's side.

"I told you not to come after me."

"We couldn't let you go with *him* !" the alicorn bellowed, pointing accusingly at the draconequus.

"You don't understand. I have to do this."

"No, you don't! There has to be another way!"

"If I don't do this, Equestria's doomed for all eternity and Cadence will never have her baby."

"But do you have any idea what this monster might do to you?!" Rainbow shouted.

"No pony chooses my fate but me."

"Fluttershy," Rarity pleaded, "you can't possibly marry this...beast!"

Discord dramatically put a hand to his heart, pretending to look offended.

"I'm sorry, but this is my decision."

"But Fluttershy," Pinkie sniffed. "We'll never see you again."

She looked at her friends sadly. "I know."

"We'll find another way to get the princesses back!" Twilight insisted. "I'll even go in your place! We'll..."

"She's right!" Applejack interrupted. They all turned to her in shock. "Fluttershy's the only pony in control of her destiny. If her decision is to save Equestria, we should respect that decision." She walked up to her friend. "You take care of yourself, ya hear?"

Fluttershy nodded and embraced the earth pony. "Make sure my animals get everything they need."

"Of course, Sugar Cube."

"Fluttershy," Rainbow started to say as she flew down to her. "You can't...you won't..."

She hugged her childhood friend. "You stood up for me so many times. Now I can return the favor."

She hovered over to Rarity. "You can keep my clothes, if you like."

The unicorn was astonished. "Darling, you can't expect me to..." She stopped as she too received a hug. "Don't be silly. I'll donate them. They're not my size anyway."

Fluttershy then turned to the pink earth pony. "Pinkie Pie, I..."

Pinkie let out a wail and flung her hooves around her neck. "Don't forget us, okay? I mean even if you'll never see us again, don't forget our names! I mean it's easy to forget one's name after not seeing them for a while and..."

"I won't forget you, Pinkie."

She sniffed and hugged tighter. "I know."

Once Pinkie had loosened her grip, Fluttershy turned to Spike. Before she could say anything, he wrapped his arms around her legs with a whine. She then looked up at Twilight, who was on the verge of tears.

"I'll be fine," she assured her. "I promise."

"How can you possibly keep that promise?" the alicorn choked.

"You know how good I am with creatures." The rest she said in a whisper. "I think I can tame him."

"But...but..."

"For Cadence."

She nodded and embraced her. Discord was about ready to gag.

"Hello?" he called, waving the ring box. "Waiting for an answer here!"

Fluttershy pulled away from her friends and courageously faced the draconequus. She stuck out her hoof and uttered, "Yes."

Discord smiled in triumph as he zapped the box away. The ring then reappeared on a chain around Fluttershy's neck. The draconequus cackled as he scooped his bride-to-be in his arms. The ponies watched in horror.

"If you hurt a hair on her head...!" Rainbow warned.

"I assure you, she won't be harmed, so long as you don't try and take her back. Now, if you'll excuse us, we have a wedding to plan!"

With a final triumphant laugh, Discord vanished with Fluttershy and in their place, the three princesses appeared, their horns restored to their heads.

"What's happened?" Luna demanded. "Where's Discord?"

The ponies burst into tears. Applejack was the only one with the strength to speak.

"He's...taken a bride."

Their eyes widened. "Who?" Celestia asked. In receiving no response, she beseeched her student. "Twilight? Who did he take?"

The purple alicorn buried her face in her hooves, knowing her friend was gone because of her failure as a princess. "I'm sorry, Fluttershy...I'm so, so sorry!"

That SpikexApplejack thing was a result of me reading a fic of that pairing, one which I have mixed feelings about. I just thought it would be funny.

PLAYS DRAMATIC MUSIC

The Arrangement

One, Celestia's hard to capture. Two, Discord's so complicated even I don't understand what he wants! Three, Fluttershy, either be brave or don't be!

Discord was still laughing when they arrived at their destination. Fluttershy gazed up at the floating dark castle. Cotton candy clouds surrounded it, raining chocolate milk.

"Like what I've done with the place?" the draconequus asked her.

"It's..." she stammered, "lovely."

"Wait until you see the inside!"

He carried her to the door and opened it up. Fluttershy's eyes widened at the interior. It was like looking at a drawing by M.C. Escher, with stairs leading to nowhere and doors hanging sideways.

"Welcome to my humble abode!" Discord said proudly. "Or should I say *our* humble abode? What do you think?"

She put a hoof to her head. "I think I'm getting dizzy."

He chuckled. "You'll get used to it, my dear. After all, this is your new home."

"My...my..."

Overwhelmed with it all, Fluttershy fainted in his arms. He summoned a daybed and set her down gently. He gazed in triumph at his prize. *So innocent*, he thought. *Well, we'll soon fix that.*

"She sacrificed herself for us?" Cadence asked in wonder.

"She thought she was the only one who could do it," Applejack explained solemnly.

"He told us what our freedom would have cost, but I never would have thought Fluttershy..."

She buried her face in her husband's shoulder.

"That creature has gone too far this time!" Luna bellowed, using her traditional Canterlot voice. "We motion that we go to that castle and demand he return the pegasus at once!"

Celestia put a wing around her. "No, sister. If the agreement made is broken, Discord could unleash his chaos again."

"But..." she stammered. "You can't expect us to allow such an innocent soul to be tied to that monster!"

"This is all my fault," Twilight whimpered. "I'm sorry, Princess Celestia. I've failed you."

Celestia raised an eyebrow. "How have you failed me?"

"You left me in charge of Equestria, and it was put in danger because I didn't take precaution. And...I let one of my best friends accept a fate worse than death!" She hid her face in her hooves. "I'm a terrible ruler!"

She stopped crying as her mentor lifted her chin. "Being a ruler means one has to make difficult decisions for the good of her subjects. There was nothing else to be done."

"It should have been me then! I could have handled him, I could have..."

"I am as distressed as you are, but this was her choice. Discord may do terrible things, but believe me when I say he won't bring Fluttershy any physical harm."

"How do you know that?"

"His nature is to corrupt what is orderly, not to inflict pain. Some

creatures...are not as evil as they seem."

"So," Pinkie Pie sniffed, "what do we do now?"

"All we can do now is pray that Fluttershy will be safe and move on with our lives."

When Fluttershy had gained consciousness, she was lying on a couch. She glanced at her surroundings and the ring around her neck, realizing that the events of the day hadn't been a dream. She sighed heavily. She had accepted Discord's proposal, saved the princesses, lost her friends and freedom all in one day. Now she was engaged to the Lord of Chaos with no escape. Speaking of which, where was Discord?

Her answer came sooner than expected as the creature materialized above her. She squeaked and jumped to the back of the couch in surprise.

"Have a nice rest, my dear?" he asked.

She struggled to get her words out. "H-how long was I out?"

"About an hour or so. I took the time to decorate your room. You like green, right?"

"S-sure?"

"Of course, this living arrangement is only temporary until we are married, then we'll be sharing a room," he said slyly.

Fluttershy shivered at the thought. "Um, w-when i-is this w-wedding exactly?"

"Oh, it could be next month, next week, or even tomorrow, if you like!"

"T-tomorrow?!"

"That reminds me. We need to pick out your dress! I know it's bad

luck for me to see it and all, but given the circumstances..."

"Um, don't you think...?"

She found herself standing on a pedestal facing three mirrors. Discord was dressed as a tailor and taking her measurements.

"Now, let's see. I'd say you're a size four. Am I right?"

"Aren't you going...?"

She watched in shock as Discord made several wedding gowns appear on her body.

"Too frilly. Too casual. Too flowery. Not flowery enough. Too white. Too blue."

He stopped at an ivory colored gown with green trimming. A thin veil draped over her head from a crown of blue daisies.

"Why, darling," he purred, gesturing towards her reflection. "You look beautiful. Your fiancé's very lucky to have you. Oh wait. That's me!"

She couldn't take it anymore and shouted, "Discord!"

"Yes, my dear?"

She turned to face him. "Don't you think tomorrow's a bit...soon?"

He pretended to think about it. "No."

"B-but...I hardly know you as it is..."

"Do I need to remind you of the terms of our agreement?"

"I'll still marry you, just...not yet."

"Care to explain your reasons behind this?"

"Well...I...you see..."

"Oh, come now, dear. Let's not be strangers. Tell me."

She gulped. "It's just that...I always thought that...when I got married...I would...fall in love with him first."

"Oh, there will be plenty of time for that."

Fluttershy swallowed her fear and narrowed her eyes at him. "You said you would give me whatever I desired, right?"

Discord fiddled with his hands. "I did say that, didn't I?"

"Well, I desire that we postpone our wedding."

"But..."

"And you said you wanted a willing bride, right?"

"I did, but..."

"I would be even more willing if we got to know each other first!"

He was starting to get very annoyed and felt like turning her into an orange, but he took a deep breath and calmed down. It was obviously going to take a lot to get through to this pony, regarding the fact that she had been the only one who had resisted him in the labyrinth. He had to take this one step at a time.

"Very well, my dear. As you wish." He snapped his fingers, making the gown and mirrors disappear. "We'll postpone the wedding *for now*."

"Until...when?" she could not help but ask.

An idea struck him. "I'll tell you what." He continued as he circled her. "Every night, I will ask you a teensy question. If you don't give me the answer I want, I will keep asking until you do."

"And...when I do?"

"Well," he smirked, "let's just say that'll be our wedding day."

Fluttershy shuddered. "W-what's the question?"

"I'll tell you later. Right now, you look hungry."

As if on cue, her stomach grumbled. "I did skip breakfast..."

"Say no more!"

An oddly shaped table appeared between them and they were seated on either end. Discord summoned a candelabrum as a last minute touch.

"What will it be, my dear? Chicken à la king? Lobster?"

As he listed each dish, it appeared before her.

"Um," Fluttershy uttered. "I'm a vegetarian."

"Oh, right. My bad. Hay? Oats? Baked Alaska?"

"Uh...just a salad would be nice."

Sure enough, a bowl of lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers and carrots materialized before her. Discord then summoned a bowl of what appeared to be...

"Um...is that...paper?"

"Is it?" he said, taking bite of it. "Hmm, crunchy. Want some?"

She raised an eyebrow. "I'll...pass."

Well, he is part goat after all. Fluttershy glanced down at the dish in front of her, shaking as she lifted her fork. Discord was confused at her hesitation.

"It's not poisoned, if that's what you're thinking."

She smiled nervously and took a bite of the salad.

"Delicious," she gulped.

"Perhaps you would like some dressing! Thousand-island or ranch?"

"Um, ranch?"

A bottle appeared in the air and squirted the substance into her

bowl.

"T-thanks," Fluttershy uttered once the bottle had vanished.

"Anything for my lovely fiancé!" He stared at her as she shivered in her seat. "You find me terrifying, don't you?"

She looked down at her hooves. "I...well..."

He shrugged. "Perfectly understandable. After all, my appearance is quite...unique." He grinned slyly at her. "Yours, on the other hand..." She nearly choked on her fork as he appeared beside her. "I will tell you a secret. I always thought that of the six, you were the most ravishing. Scratch that. Of all the ponies in *Equestria*, you were the most ravishing."

He put his paw to her face. She backed away, causing her to fall out of her chair. He caught her with his tail before she could hit the ground and lifted her to meet his eyes.

"What? Ravishing not a good enough word? How about stunning? Beautiful? Gorgeous?"

"Stop!" she squeaked.

"Stop what?" he asked as he teasingly stroked her mane.

Fluttershy wriggled out of his hold. "L-look, I...appreciate the compliment, but..."

"What?" Discord said, running his claw under her chin. "Not used to some pony calling you beautiful?"

"Not directly..."

He chuckled. "Well, you should get used to it, because I'm going to keep calling you that."

She forced a smile as she returned to her seat. She tried to finish her salad, but it was difficult with him standing so close.

"You know? I was honestly hoping you'd be the one to accept my

proposal. It was certainly bold of you to do so." She tensed as he placed his hands on her shoulders. "Don't worry, my dear. I shall make you happy. Don't think of this place as a prison. Think of it as a kingdom, where you are the Queen!"

He made a gold crown appear on her head. Fluttershy dropped her fork.

"Imagine! Our own little chaos corner of the world! No pony to tell us what to do! You can have whatever you want, be whatever you want, and do whatever you want! And I'll be by your side..."

He jumped back as she tossed the crown off her head.

"You know what?" she said quickly. "I'm really tired!"

Discord scoffed. "Don't be ridiculous! It's hardly even noon yet!"

"Oh, but I didn't get much sleep last night!" She faked a yawn. "Oh yes, I'm *very* tired! I should really get to bed!"

"Oh, very well! But first, my question..."

Fluttershy shrunk. "Yes?"

He cupped her chin in his paw. "Do you love me?"

Her eyes widened. "W-what?!"

"I asked: do you love me?"

She was silent for a long while, about ready to faint again. Would he get mad if she gave her honest answer? But if she said yes, then they would be married immediately.

"N-no."

Discord shrugged. "Fair enough. Though here's a heads up, my dear. I'm going to keep asking you until you say yes."

"W-why do you...want to...?"

"You said you wanted to fall in love before you got married, so..." He

gave her a wink. "Now, let's get you to bed, shall we?"

He picked her up bridal style and carried her to a door that was thankfully right-side-up. He opened it to reveal a room with wavy green walls.

"I know how you ponies are about gravity," Discord said, "though it is quite boring." He opened a white oddly shaped wardrobe. "Here are some clothes for you, in case you're in a fancy mood. If you don't like them, I can make a few alterations."

He carefully set her down on a canopy bed and gestured towards the chandelier hanging above. "Watch this."

He clapped his hands and the candles went out. Another clap illuminated them again.

"Neat, huh? Ooh!" He pointed to a record player. "In case it gets too quiet for you..." He moved the rod and the record played Fluttershy's favorite lullaby. *How did he know?*

"Oh, and if you get hungry in the middle of the night," he showed her a microwave sitting on a counter in the corner, "simply press one of these buttons: hay, oats, honey melon, pineapple, whatever you'd like! Oh!" He flew over to the windows. "And I made sure you got a great view!"

He flung open the green curtains, revealing the foggy, dreary forest outside. "Well, maybe not a *great* view, but hey, any view's better than no view!"

He waited excitedly for her reaction. Fluttershy was struck dumb as she glanced around the room. He had really put a lot of effort into this, and he seemed so eager to please her. She was starting to think Zecora was right, but it was all so much to take in.

Discord frowned at her silence. "Is it not to your liking?"

"N-no it's..." she stammered, "it's...fine."

"Was the microwave too much?"

"Um..."

"Would you prefer pink instead of green?"

"Um..."

"The bed not comfy enough?"

"It's fine!" she snapped. "Really, it's fine! Lovely, even! It's...nice."

Discord accepted her answer and drifted to the door. "Now if there's anything else you need, just holler! Sleep tight!"

Once he had closed the door, Fluttershy waited until she was sure he was gone. Then she buried her face in a lace pillow and let loose all the tears she had been holding back.

"Oh, Discord, you sly devil," the draconequus mused as he admired himself in the mirror.

"Sly?" his reflection scoffed. "You're acting like a big softy, kissing up to that wimpy pegasus!"

"Don't you understand? This is better than we could have hoped for! Listen, the ponies can't turn us to stone without the Element of Kindness, right?"

"Right. But what does that matter? They already promised not to use the Elements against us."

"Only because they didn't have a choice, but if any of our deals were to be broken, then we could be free to do whatever we want!"

"And where does the pegasus fall into this?"

He cackled. "I'll bet you by the end of the month, that pegasus will be so hopelessly in love with me, she'll do just about anything for me! She won't be able to use her Element against me, which means there will be nothing stopping me from taking over Equestria! And just think! I'll even gain a queen in the process!"

His reflection burst into laughter. "Really?! That's your plan?! Do you honestly think that little pony would fall in love with you?!"

Discord put his hands on his hips. "And why not?"

"Well, have you looked at yourself lately?"

"Hey, I have my charms!"

"Are you talking about the magic kind of charms or the wooing kind of charms? Because the latter is just hopeless!"

He grabbed the mirror. "How would you like to be smashed into millions of pieces?!"

"Hey, hey! Seven years of bad luck!"

"Don't talk to me about bad luck! I *invented* bad luck!"

He lifted the glass, ready to destroy it. Then he paused and slapped himself in the face.

"What am I doing?"

He set the mirror down and stared at his reflection, which had returned to normal. He studied his distorted face and thought of Fluttershy's beauty. How could he win her heart? She had already agreed to marry him, but not because she wanted to. She only wanted to save her friends. Why would she ever want him?

He shook these thoughts out of his head. "Oh, what does it matter? There are other ways to impress a lady." He studied his reflection again. "Though maybe I should trim my beard."

Oh Discord, still talking to yourself.

I'm going to be slow on future updates, because I have to study for finals. Mom's already upset with all this MLP "nonsense" as it is!

The Gift

So, turns out that there are at least three Fluttercord fics currently in the process following a sort of Beauty and the Beast plot: mine, FanofCartoon's "Discord Promise" and Legacy Now's "Pony and the Beast." They are both pretty good, and I should say the latter actually pushed me to writing this, though as far as I can see, we are all taking different directions with our stories.

Anyway, I managed to write this in between studies. Also helps that my classes are over so I have time to prepare for exams and do other stuff! There are a lot of movie references in this chapter, but I want you to figure them out for yourselves. Enjoy!

Fluttershy's usual nightmare was interrupted by a loud, familiar voice: "STAY AWAY FROM HER OR WE SHALL VANQUISH THEE!"

The draconequus then vanished and a certain blue alicorn appeared before her in the darkness.

"Princess Luna?" she gasped.

"Are you alright, Fluttershy?" the princess inquired.

"Yes. Thank you, but...I heard you could enter dreams, but how come you haven't shown up before?"

"Apologies, for I have many subjects. It was very inconsiderate of me not to have rid your head of that creature before. But Fluttershy, your friends worry about you. Has he hurt you? The real Discord?"

"So far, no..."

"Has he been cruel to you in any way?"

"Well, not exactly, but..."

"Yes?"

She gulped. "He...he wants me to love him."

Luna's eyes widened. "Pardon?"

"You see, I...I convinced him to postpone the wedding, but he wants me to love him first."

"Can you love a creature so horrid and cruel?!" Luna asked angrily.

"He's...not so bad..."

"Fluttershy, he is a deceitful creature! He could be trying to lure you into a trap!"

"But...he already has me..."

"He could be attempting to bend you against your will!"

"I don't know about that, but...he's taking good care of me, and...he said he'd give me anything I desired."

"What about your freedom?"

"Well..."

She trailed off as Luna's image started shifting. "You're waking! I must go!"

"Tell my friends I'm okay!" Fluttershy shouted. "Tell them..."

She didn't get to finish as the sunlight had awoken her. She checked the squiggly handed clock on the wall. It was seven in the morning. At some point in her weeping yesterday, she had fallen asleep. Had she really been asleep for that long?

There was a knock at her door. She didn't need to ask who it was.

"Come in?"

As she had figured, it was Discord who opened the door, a wide grin upon his face.

"Good morning, my beauteous bride!" he chimed. "You certainly *were* tired to have slept the whole day! Well, now that you're up, how about some breakfast?"

"Um, sure?"

Honestly, she wasn't hungry and did not want to spend more time with Discord, but she did not want to be rude. *Give him a chance*, she told herself. *After all, he's probably not used to being nice to ponies.*

With a snap of his fingers, she was seated at the table. Discord materialized behind her.

"What would my lovely fiancé like this morning? Pancakes? Toast? Muffins?"

"Um, pancakes would be..."

A stack of pancakes appeared in front of her before she could finish her sentence.

"I trust you slept well?" he inquired.

"Yes," she fibbed.

"And the bed? Was it comfortable enough?"

"Oh, yes, very."

He leaned his face toward her. "I have a gift for you."

He opened his paw and summoned a jade bracelet. Fluttershy looked at it unsurely as he slid it on her hoof.

"It's...lovely."

"Well, it's nothing compared to you."

He ran his claw under her chin, only to have her gently push it away.

It was like this for the next few days. Discord would attempt to court her, she would resist. Sometimes he would offer her flowers, which she thought was sweet, but still refused them. Every night, he would ask her if she loved him, but she would always reply no. Despite what Zecora had told her, Fluttershy was not ready to let Discord in. He persisted, flattering her, showering her with gifts, but still, she would not submit. She hardly even ate what was given her and spent most of her time in her room alone. The draconequus was getting very impatient.

One day, she absolutely refused to come out of her room. It wasn't until the afternoon that Discord attempted to lure her out.

"Oh, Fluttershy!" he called. "Your knight in shining armor's here!"

She opened the door slightly to see the draconequus in a suit of gold armor, holding a bouquet of roses upside down. When he noticed this error, he quickly corrected it. Fluttershy just slammed the door without a second glance. Discord frowned, but kept his cool.

"Come now, my dear. You've been in there all day."

"Go away!" she screamed.

He clenched his teeth as he made the armor and flowers disappear. "I've been patient with you, pony, but you *really* don't want to make me angry!"

"Go ahead! Get angry! Every night you ask me the same question and I will always give the same answer! It's still no!"

"Come out here, right now!" he bellowed.

There was a pause, and then a soft, but defiant, "No."

"You can't stay in there forever!"

"Oh, yes I can! I have an endless supply of food in here!"

"I really should have rethought putting that microwave in," he muttered, face palming himself.

He took a deep breath. *Play it cool, Discord.* He spoke in a softer voice.

"Will you come out?"

"No!"

He grunted, but then tried a different tactic. "Will you come out, *please ?*"

"No, *thank you !*"

He erupted like a volcano. "You come out here this instant!"

"I won't! And you can't make me!"

"Have you forgotten who I am?!"

With a snap of his fingers, she was out in front of the door. He used his index finger to levitate the engagement ring around her neck, lifting her in the process.

"You promised yourself to me," he growled, pointing toward the ring, "and you are going to be my wife, love me or not!"

Seeing his dark expression, Fluttershy was truly afraid of him at this moment, but she stayed strong and glared back at him. "Fine! Marry me then! Don't wait for me to love you! Because there is no way in this world I could ever love a monster like you!"

"Oh, is that so?! Well, let's stop wasting time then! We'll be married first thing in the morning, whether you like it or not!"

As he released his magic from her, she crossed her hooves and turned away.

"I don't care! I'll never love you! How can you expect me to love you when you keep me prisoner?" She faced him with a glare. "How can you expect *any* pony to love you when you are incapable of any love whatsoever?!"

"That's it, missy! Go to your room!"

"You're not my mother!"

"But I am your future husband, so get used to my orders!"

"Well, I'm your future wife, so get used to my complaints!"

"Whatever! We're still getting married tomorrow, so ha!"

"Fine!"

"Fine!"

"Fine!"

She slammed the door angrily. Then she rushed to her bed and cried.

"Oh, that pony!" Discord grunted. "No! Even worse! That *female*!"

Then he heard the pony's weeping and his anger faded. He hadn't meant to make her *cry*. He was only showing her who was in control around here. He covered his ears, trying to block out her whining as he teleported to his bedroom.

"What will it take?!" he cursed.

His shoulder devil then appeared. "You know what I think? If you want that pony to love you, *make* her love you! Put a spell on her!"

Another miniature version of him dressed in a white gown and halo appeared on his other shoulder. "No, you can't force some pony to love you. Besides, such a spell can easily be undone."

"Why do I have a shoulder angel?" Discord exclaimed. "I'm not supposed to have a good conscience!"

"Yeah, take a hike, goody-goody!" the devil shouted.

"You take a hike!" the angel rebutted.

"You!"

" *You* !"

"You infinity!"

"Shut up!" Discord demanded, slumping on his bed. "Okay, I don't care what kind of conscience I have, just some pony explain to me why that pegasus has to be so difficult!"

"Why do you even bother?" his reflection in the mirror asked.

"I told you!" Discord shouted. "Having her fall in love with me is part of the plan, but she won't cooperate! I give her a comfortable room, a variety of food, exquisite clothing and what gratitude do I get?!"

"Lots of whining and crying," the devil muttered.

"Precisely!"

"Give her time," the angel advised. "You did take away her friends and freedom after all."

"But she agreed to it!"

"So what's the point in making her fall in love with you?" the reflection inquired. "If I didn't know any better, I'd say you *want* her to love you."

"Of course I do! Did you not hear me earlier?!"

"I mean I think that pony's turned you soft!"

Discord blinked and then growled. "Soft?! You're calling *me*, the Master of Chaos, *soft* ?!"

"Well, have you seen yourself the past few days?" The image spoke in a mocking tone. "Oh, Fluttershy! You are so beautiful! Do you love me?!" It stuck out its tongue. "It's sickening!"

"He's got a point," the devil agreed.

"Yep," the angel nodded.

"You're not supposed to agree with them!" Discord exclaimed.

"Come now, even I know you're not perfect."

The draconequus cried out and stomped his foot, which made the sound of thousands of glasses shattering. Then realization hit him.

"Why am I talking to you?" he asked as he flicked the angel and devil off his shoulders. "You're all me! I can't take advice from myself! I need to ask some pony else."

He tapped his chin until he came up with an idea.

Zecora was shocked to open her door and find the Lord of Chaos standing there.

"Hello, neighbor!" he waved.

Her mouth was open, but she could get no words out.

"You're not still mad about me turning your hut upside-down, are you?" he asked as he invited himself in. "It was nothing personal, just chaos."

"Um..." Zecora stammered.

He rolled his eyes. "Alright, so here's the deal. I hear you're good at giving advice. Am I right?" The zebra nodded absent mindedly. "Well, I need it! And if you tell any pony about this, I'll turn you into an acorn to feed to the squirrels!"

"Alright!" She cleared her throat. "No need to frown! Would you have some tea and sit down?"

"Not much of a tea drinker. I prefer chocolate milk."

But he sat down anyway. Zecora seated herself across from him.

"Now what can I do to fix what's troubling you?"

Discord put his head in his hands and sighed. "It's my fiancé, Fluttershy! I'm sure you've heard of our engagement..."

"I heard the squeal that she has accepted your deal?"

"Yes, well...she's not exactly...happy."

"You did take her from her friends, so it was expected her happiness should..."

"That's what my shoulder angel said!" Zecora blinked at him. "Never mind. But I've swallowed my dignity to please this woman! I've given her all the luxury and comfort a pony could want and she doesn't give so much as a smile! She just sits in her room and cries!" He looked pleadingly at the zebra. "What am I doing wrong?"

"I can help you if you will keep calm and let me see your palm."

He held out his eagle claw and lion paw. "Which one?"

She took his paw and examined it closely. Discord squinted to see what she was looking at.

"Ah," she uttered with understanding. "So many years of sadness and tears. You have been very lonely, being without any pony."

"I'm not lonely!" the draconequus snapped. "I have chaos and chocolate milk and duplicates to talk to! What more could I want?!"

She ignored his protest and continued. "So much pain, which you only relieve through chocolate rain."

"Seriously, what are you looking at?"

"But only the love of a mare can make you complete, and to win her heart, you must be sweet."

He tugged his paw away. "Quit talking in riddles! That's *my* job! How do I make Fluttershy happy?"

"To replace her sadness with happiness, you must act with kindness."

He stared at her. "Come again?"

"Fluttershy is not to be won by comfort and jewels. Kindness and consideration will be your tools. Learn of her interests, her

pleasures, her joys, and use them instead of your ploys."

Discord lost his patience and slammed a fist on the table. "Cut the rhyme and speak in English!"

Zecora narrowed her eyes. "Listen, Fluttershy's the Element of Kindness, so to impress her, be *kind* to her!"

"Kind?! Do you even know who I am?"

"You want the girl or not?!"

"Okay, okay! So how do I do this... *kind* thing?"

"Do something for her! Give her a gift!"

"I've given her gifts!"

"Something she likes."

"Something she likes?" He paused to think. "Well, she doesn't really do anything other than play with animals and admire boring plants..." His face lit up. "Wait a minute. That's it!" He turned to the zebra. "You're *good*! You're welcome at my castle any time!"

After he had vanished, Zecora shook her head with a laugh. "Oh, if he were to know where this was going to go."

Meanwhile, Spike and Applejack were trying to keep Fluttershy's animals under control.

"Y'all come back here, ya varmints!" she shouted at beavers as they hauled away a tree they had recently cut down.

"Angel, I have to finish fluffing your tail!" Spike called as he chased after the white rabbit that had hair curlers in his tail.

"Spike, help me round up these chickens!"

"I'm kind of busy here!"

He grabbed hold of Angel, who gave him a hard kick in the snout.

"I thought you were supposed to be good with takin' care of critters," Applejack said.

"Yeah," Spike grunted as he lost his grip on the bunny. "Maybe when there are six of them at a time, not six hundred! What about you? Don't you raise animals for a living?"

"My animals are trained and stay in their pens. Wynona, get those weasels out of the coop!"

"How does Fluttershy handle these guys?! I wish they would all just disappear!"

As he said that, a white flash caused the animals to vanish from sight. All that was left was Applejack, Spike and Wynona.

"I didn't mean that literally."

"What in tarnation?" the pony gasped. "Where'd they get off to?"

Suddenly, Spike burped up a letter. When he opened it, he raised an eyebrow.

"This isn't from the princess."

"Let me see." As Applejack read the note, her eyes widened. "Well, I'll be darn."

The tears would not stop. After hearing that she would be married to that monster tomorrow, the waterworks had broken loose.

She should run away, she had thought, but Fluttershy knew that breaking her promise would give Discord the freedom of taking over Equestria. Besides, he could bring her back with the snap of his fingers.

She had cried so much, the room was starting to flood. Perhaps she would be able to drown herself in a few moments. She didn't care

what happened to her anymore.

Zecora had been wrong. Discord was a heartless monster and nothing more. Now she was doomed to be his forever, with death being her only escape.

A light knock on her door startled her. "Fluttershy?"

She buried her face in her pillow. "Go away!"

Outside, Discord silently cursed, but then took a deep breath. "I just wanted to say I'm...s-s-s..."

"What?" Fluttershy choked, lifting her head.

"I'm s-s-s-sorry!"

This caught her attention. This must have been his first time saying that word.

"I didn't realize how upset this deal would make you..."

"Yes, you did!" she snapped.

"Okay, I did! I just ignored that fact. You see...I don't know how to... act in these kinds of situations. I'm sorry I lost my temper with you earlier, but...can you at least give me a chance to make it up to you?"

She paused. "Well..."

"You don't have to marry me tomorrow."

He waited patiently. After a while, she opened the door and looked up at him.

"What is it?"

He grinned a little. "I have something to show you, but first, close your eyes!"

She raised an eyebrow at him, but complied. He waved a paw in front of her to check that she could not see. Smiling excitedly, he

took her front hooves and led her to the door leading outside.

Fluttershy did not know what to expect. She was surprised by how tenderly he was holding her hooves. She had to flap her wings to keep her balance, but his touch assured her that if she fell over, he would catch her. She felt a breeze as they went outside. She took a deep breath, as this was her first amount of fresh air in days.

"Can I open them?" she asked.

He led her forward a little more, then gently let go of her hooves and whispered in her ear. "Alright. Now."

She opened her eyes and gasped. Surrounding her were acres of plants and flowers of all species and colors. There was an especially large patch of tulips, her favorite. Running about were hundreds of animals, many she recognized from home, but others from elsewhere. She saw kangaroos, toucans, and many more. Everything was vibrant, colorful, the kind of things you would never expect to see in the Everfree Forest. She also noticed they were still floating on the floating ground, but this garden had been added to the clump of earth.

"I brought all your little friends from home," Discord said. "I also brought a few others I thought you would be interested in. Do you like the tulips? I know they're your favorite. I also made a gazebo." He pointed towards it. "You know, in case you want to sit in the shade. Otherwise, there are big trees." He led her to a glimmering pond. "And look, a home for your ducks and fish, also good for swimming. I even put a bridge!"

He then gestured toward a large wooden machine with tubes of acorns, carrots and other foods. "Now, I know how much you like feeding the animals, so I put a food dispenser over there with everything every animal needs."

Her silence made him frown. Then his ears drooped. She hated it. He knew the food dispenser was too much.

"I..." Fluttershy stammered, still staring at the scene. "I...I don't know what to say."

"A thank you would be nice," Discord muttered sadly.

Suddenly, the pegasus did something unexpected. She attacked him around the waist with a hug. The draconequus perked up his ears, tensed his body and widened his eyes at her touch. No pony had ever touched him like this before, let alone hugged him. Such a touch was new and strange...and pleasant.

"This is the most wonderful thing any pony has ever done for me!" she exclaimed. "Thank you! I love it so much!"

He looked down at the pony and saw what he had been hoping to see for the past few days: a smile. A true, happy smile that made her beautiful face even more beautiful.

He felt a tug in his chest, as his heart started beating, perhaps for the first time in millennia. It beat even faster as the pony's face nuzzled into his fur.

Slowly, and hesitantly, he wrapped his arms around her small frame, and muttered, "You're welcome."

Fluttershy pulled away as she heard a squeak and let out another gasp.

"Angel! I thought I'd never see you again!"

Discord watched as she flew to her beloved bunny. Other animals surrounded her, delighted to see her. He could not take his eyes off her. That pony, that kind, gentle, beautiful little pony. Her teal eyes sparkled with joy, her pink mane flowed in the mild breeze and her excited voice was like a tingling bell. His heart pounded faster with every second he watched her, until it was about ready to leap out of his chest.

What was this strange sensation developing inside him? He did not know what it was, but it caused a big smile to spread across his face.

In the Ponyville library, Twilight read the message they had

received:

" Dear ponies, do not look for animals. They are at my place, with their owner. Your unfriendly neighborhood Discord."

Rainbow Dash looked at the note. "Why did he use letters from magazines?"

"To hide his identity!" Pinkie exclaimed. "Oh, but he signed his name, and...we know who he is, because he has Fluttershy..."

"Why would Discord take the animals for Fluttershy?" Rarity questioned

Applejack glanced at Spike. "Ponies will do anything to please the ones they love."

"Discord? Love?" Rainbow Dash laughed. "That's a hoot!"

"Doesn't this break the deal?" the dragon inquired. "I mean he can't use his magic outside of the forest, right?"

Twilight exchanged a glance with Applejack before answering, "I think we can make an exception for this one."

Took a while to get this one just right. Hope it meets your expectations. Reviews are appreciated!

The Spark

Ugh, I love writing fanfics so much i just can't stay away. Some of this was inspired by FanofCartoons' story.

Discord watched the pegasus from his bedroom window as she fed her animals. He had distanced himself, as his presence disturbed the critters. Besides, he did not want her to notice him staring.

He was fascinated by how well she was able to tame every creature, calming them down and nuzzling them. Even the large bear posed no threat to her. She even allowed it to lick her mane.

How did she do it? How could she be so kind that even the fiercest of creatures were enchanted by her? Ironically enough, that was exactly what he thought of her: enchanting.

He shook his head. "What's happening to me?"

His reflection responded, "You're turning into a sap, and all for that wimpy pegasus!"

"Hey!" Discord exclaimed, glaring at the mirror. "Don't talk about her that way!"

"See? You've even stooped so low as to defend her honor! You've fallen for your own act!"

"I have not! I just..." he twiddled his fingers, "happen to find my fiancé...slightly attractive. What's wrong with that?"

"What's *wrong* ?! You've never found any pony attractive in your life! Even if you were to start, why would it be *this* pony? I mean look at her!"

Discord glanced back out the window. "Yeah, so?"

"She's just so... *flawless* ! There's not an ounce of discord in her!"

She's just so...so..."

The draconequus sighed dreamily. "Perfect."

"Exactly! She's *too* perfect! You have to change her! Turn her hair green or something!"

"You're right. She *is* too perfect. Maybe that's what makes her so interesting."

"Ugh!" the reflection growled. "Listen to yourself! Where is your pride?!"

"Oh, shut up!"

He waved his hand and draped a blanket over the mirror then turned his attention back to Fluttershy. He had to get closer, but he did not want to frighten her. So he perched on a tree branch just a few feet away, scaring a few birds in the process. His grin widened. She certainly was more interesting up close.

"Hold still, Angel Bunny," she said in her sweet voice as she fluffed the rabbit's tail. "There. All done."

The rabbit leapt into her hooves and cuddled her. Discord's heart fluttered as he heard her giggle for the first time.

"Yes, I missed you too."

Angel then pulled away and yapped something that made Fluttershy frown.

"Oh, you see...I made a deal with him and...we're getting married."

As the other animals heard this, they made frantic noises. She tried to calm them down.

"Yes, yes, I know, he doesn't appear very friendly..."

Discord was starting to regret bringing those animals.

"But...he's not as bad as you think."

This made his eyes widen. Could it be that this pony did not hate him after all? Could it be that he was finally getting to her? The animals screamed in protest.

"No, really," Fluttershy assured them. "He hasn't really done anything to me yet...though I will admit, he still scares me a little... but he did bring you all here, and that makes me happy."

She then started singing to the birds, who sang in response. Discord closed his eyes as he listened to that sweet, melodic voice of hers. Never had he ever heard a sound so beautiful, so perfect, much like the pony it came from. He would have listened to it all day had the branch not given way beneath him. He let out a cry as he hit the ground, frightening the animals and causing them to scatter. Fluttershy shrieked and spun around. Her terror faded once she saw the draconequus' state.

"Goodness, are you hurt?" she asked, flying over to him.

He flinched as she lightly touched his paw.

"Oh, don't worry about me," he said, getting up. "I'm fine."

Fluttershy glanced up at the broken limb. "Were you spying on me?"

"No! Well, I...yes." He grinned sheepishly. "You see...I didn't want to disturb you, and...sorry I scared your animals off."

She sighed. "Well, as long as you're here, care to help me feed the animals? There's so many of them you see and it's getting late..."

She pointed at the sky turning orange and pink from the sunset.

"Sure, I can take care of it!" he exclaimed, snapping his fingers. "Done! Now how about some dinner?"

Fluttershy's stomach growled at the mention of food. "Come to think of it, I haven't eaten much today..."

With another snap of his fingers, a picnic blanket appeared beneath them, along with a champagne bottle pouring into two glasses. Discord offered her a glass at which she cringed slightly.

"Oh, no thank you. I don't drink."

"I knew that," he said nonchalantly. "It's white grape soda."

Still suspicious, she accepted the glass and took a sip. He had told the truth.

"So I take it you're enjoying the garden?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes," Fluttershy said with a smile. "Thank you again, but..." She looked up. "Some of the birds were flying, but something stopped them when they got too high."

"Oh, that. That's the invisible force field. Nothing personal, but I could not risk you escaping or some pony coming to rescue you. Nothing goes in or out without my allowance."

She stared at him with distressed eyes. "So the animals...are trapped here...like me?"

Seeing her smile disappear, Discord realized he had made a mistake and had to correct it. He gently lifted her chin.

"Cheer up, my dear. They're here with you. Isn't that all that matters?"

"I suppose," she replied, still not smiling.

He had to get that smile back, so he snapped his fingers and made a frosted carrot cake appear. Fluttershy's mouth dropped open.

"How did you...?"

"I told you," he stated simply. "I had nothing to do for three years but spy on you ponies. It was only natural that I find out a few things."

He summoned a knife to cut her a slice of the cake and placed it on a smaller plate.

"What about dinner?" she asked.

"I'm sure we can break the rules a teensy bit," he smirked.

As she took the plate, a fork materialized in her hoof, with which she took a bite. Discord grinned as her smile returned.

"This is the best carrot cake I've ever tasted!" she declared.

"Only the best for my *favorite* pony," Discord said, taking a slice of cake himself.

Fluttershy blushed but then looked at him seriously. "Why *were* you spying on me, anyway? Just now, I mean."

"I wasn't *spying*, I was... *observing*. After all, you are a... *interesting* subject to watch."

She said nothing and stared down at her hooves, her face turning red.

"I wasn't lying, you know, when I said you were beautiful."

She looked away. "T-thank you, but...I'm not *that* attractive..."

"Oh, don't be so modest, my dear!" He tilted her head toward him. "You are a natural beauty, and that's saying a lot, coming from me. Usually when I see something beautiful I turn it into a lollipop. But seriously, I would expect some pony like you to be used to such a compliment."

Fluttershy moved from his claw and looked at the grass. "Not really. I mean...I was a model for a short while..."

His eyes widened. "Really? I mean, sure, you have the look, but...I did not think you were the type to go up onstage and show yourself off!"

"I wasn't! That's why I quit. I couldn't handle all the attention and I had less time for my friends."

"Oh, I see..."

"See what?" She turned back to him to see a mischievous, disconcerting look on his face. "Discord, w-what are you...?"

She squealed as he attacked her with a hug. She kicked her legs frantically.

"Discord, let me go!"

"What's the matter?" he taunted. "Can't handle all the attention I'm giving you?"

"N-no, I..." She trailed off as he ran his claw across her back. Then she started giggling. "T-that...he he...stop that...he he...tickles!"

"Does it now? Interesting. So what happens when I do...this?!"

He moved away from her and began tickling her belly. She burst into laughter.

"Discord, please...ha-ha! Stop it!"

"You sure? Because you seem to be enjoying it."

This was his first time hearing her laugh, and it was captivating.

"Ha-ha! Please! I have to...ha-ha...finish my cake!"

"Oh, alright."

Discord sighed as he released her, only to have her tackle him over.

"Wait...what are you...? Ha-HA-HA-HA-HA!"

She was using her feathers to tickle him in return. However, she did not have the advantage of size. He snatched her up before she could get to the real torture.

"Nice try, you devious little thing!" he exclaimed. "Let this be a warning that I am the tickle torturer here, and no pony else!"

Fluttershy giggled. "Understand."

He gently set her down. "You know? You should laugh more often. Laughter becomes you well."

She blushed and then realized that was the first time she had

laughed in years.

After they had finished eating, Fluttershy was getting tired. She had been unable to sleep with everything going on, so she decided to retire early. When she entered her room, she looked in the mirror on the vanity, examining her face and hair. No pony had called her beautiful before, and it felt good. It was as she was crawling into bed that she realized that Discord had forgotten to ask his question that night.

"Thanks for walkin' me home, Spike," Applejack said when they reached the edge of the farm. "And thanks again for helpin' me with the critters. Even though it didn't turn out so well, it was still mighty big of ya."

"Anything for you, AJ," the dragon said with a smile.

The pony watched with a sigh as he trudged down the road. The feeling was on again, and it was not healthy. After all, there was at least a seven-year gap between them, not to mention a difference in species. Also, the little fella had his eyes for another.

It was then that Applejack veered her path towards the Everfree Forest. As usual, Zecora was hospitable and offered her tea.

"I'd tell ya why I'm here," the southern pony said, "but I'm guessin' ya already know."

"You want to relieve the hush on your confusing crush," the zebra grinned.

She hid her face behind her hat in embarrassment. Zecora put an assuring hoof on her shoulder.

"I do not need the tea for me to see that age, species and love are in your way, yet your emotions appear to stay."

Applejack lifted the brim of her hat slightly. "What am I to do, Zecora?"

"The dragon is young, so wait until he is in a mature state. Whether it will go well, that only time can tell."

She sighed and sunk her head onto the table. "He's my friend, and always willin' to help. I'd be lyin' if I said he wasn't adorable. I just... feel different when I'm around him. Silly, huh? A pony and a dragon."

"Yet there is a pegasus engaged to a draconequus."

"Yeah, I've been wonderin' about that too. Is Fluttershy...okay? I mean you live so close to Discord now. Know anythin'?"

Zecora glanced around and then leaned forward to whisper. "You can be assured by me, that draconequus is not all he appears to be."

Applejack was about to say something when Rainbow Dash bolted through the door without knocking.

"Zecora! I need your advice, I...oh, Applejack...I didn't know you were here, I'll...come back later..."

"Nonsense!" the southern pony exclaimed. "Whatever you've got to tell Zecora, ya can tell me."

Rainbow took a deep breath. "Soarin asked me out!"

Applejack's eyes widened. "Ya mean that stallion in the Wonderbolts?"

"Yeah, him! Turns out he's had a crush on me ever since I saved his pie! What should I do?!"

"He likes apple pies. I'd say he's a keeper."

Zecora laughed. "Well, strike me from above! Seems every pony's having issues on love!"

Rainbow scrunched her nose. "Uh, say what now?"

Fluttershy woke up with a scream. Discord was at her bedside in a second, his face filled with concern.

"What is it?! What's wrong?!"

She sighed in relief. "Nothing. It was a bad dream."

"Oh." Discord blushed in embarrassment. "Apologies. I just thought..."

"That I was in danger?" she finished.

She had to admit that was awfully sweet of him.

"Yes, but you're not, I see. So I'll just be going..."

"Wait! Could you, um...stay for a little bit?"

He stared at her, and then clapped his hands, turning the lights on. He sat on the edge of the bed.

"So this nightmare," he said, "what was it about?"

Fluttershy was about to tell him, but then remembered who she was talking to and hid her face under the covers. Discord was confused by this reaction. Then he recalled something and frowned.

"Was it about...me?"

She peered out at him. "How did you...?"

"You mentioned it to your friends."

She hid her face again in shame. "I'm really sorry, I..."

"Tell me."

"What?"

"Tell me about it."

She was hesitant at first, but the beans had been spilt. She told him how it was the same every night: he would hold her, chuckle darkly,

whisper horrible things in her ear, and sometimes turn her into her discordant self again. It stung him.

"Is that how you see me?" he asked with hurt in his eyes.

"I...I..."

He started to rise. "Maybe I shouldn't be here..."

"No!" she begged. "Please, I...I don't know why I keep dreaming it."

He gritted his teeth. "Well, I *am* a monster!"

Discord was about to snap his fingers when she touched his paw.

"Please, Discord. Don't go. I...I don't want to be alone."

He turned to her coldly. "Well, I think the very cause of your fear is the last creature you'd want to keep you company!"

"But you're *not* the creature from my dreams! It may look like you, but it's not the real you. And...I'd prefer you any day."

When he gazed into those pleading eyes, his coldness dissolved. He could not leave her in this state.

"Alright," he said with a sigh. "I'll stay with you until you fall asleep."

She smiled in thanks. "I'm not really sure if I can go to sleep now."

"How about I help you?"

"Sure, but what...?"

With a snap of his fingers, they found themselves sitting on top of a cloud high above the castle.

"Why are we up here?" Fluttershy asked.

"It's a clear night," Discord said, lounging onto his back. "I thought we could have a look at the stars."

She glanced up at the sky and nodded in agreement. She fell back beside him.

"They're beautiful," she marveled.

"Yes, you are," Discord muttered. She raised an eyebrow at him. "I mean...the stars! Like you said. Beautiful."

Fluttershy giggled and turned her attention back to the sky. The draconequus was more interested in her than the stars.

"You know Twilight could name all the stars and planets and constellations?" she said. "Every single one of them!"

Her smile wavered at the thought of her friend. Discord saw this and knew he had to distract her.

"The stars are rather boring when they're stuck on the sky like that, aren't they?"

He waved his paw and Fluttershy gasped as the stars moved into the shape of a butterfly.

"Discord, you promised..."

"What? I said I would confine my magic to my territory, and this part of the sky is in my territory."

"But that's not...Princess Luna..."

"Oh, Lulu will appreciate me putting some excitement into her night! You have to admit this is impressive!"

Fluttershy watched as the astral butterfly flapped its wings against the night sky and floated in circles. "Well...it is kind of...neat..."

Discord laughed triumphantly as the smile returned to her face. "See? My chaos can be useful."

"How is rearranging the stars useful?"

He grinned and made writing motions with his claw, using the stars to spell out a message. Fluttershy's eyes grew to the size of frying pans as she read it: *Do you love me? Check Yes or No.* Underneath, he drew two boxes marked 'Yes' and 'No.'

When she turned to him, he had that excited look on his face. He handed her his glowing claw, still pointing towards the sky. She glanced between him and the message, and then finally took the claw and drew a check in the second box.

Discord frowned and erased the message, hopefully before any pony could see it. Fluttershy looked at him apologetically.

"I-I'm really sorry, but...I just don't...feel that way about you yet..."

"No, it's okay!" he said quickly.

But it was not okay. She had rejected him before, but for some reason, it hurt this time. It was almost as if he *wanted* her to say yes.

He stiffened as he felt something nuzzle against him. He glanced down to see the pegasus curling up to him.

"But I'm willing to accept you as a friend," she said softly.

It was as if a string were pulled inside his chest. "Friend?"

"Why, of course. I think it's only fair."

He did not know what to say. "Oh...well, I've...never really had a friend before."

"Never?"

"What do you think?"

She nuzzled closer to him. "Well, now you do. And I'm sorry."

He blinked. "For what?"

"I was wrong about you. You're not a monster."

She closed her eyes and snuggled into his fur. Discord stared at her in awe, not believing that such a pony could exist. Not only was she beautiful beyond belief, but she was kind enough to even care for *him*. Even if she had not given him what he had expected, the idea of having a friend made his heart explode. *Who knew I even had a*

heart?

He stuck out his claw unsurely and began to stroke her mane. Fluttershy opened her eyes and looked up at him. He retracted his claw, not sure why he was suddenly so hesitant.

"Sorry, I...do you mind?"

She stared at him for a moment and then smiled. "No, it's okay." She flipped onto her belly and closed her eyes. "Go ahead, so long as you don't tickle me again."

He chuckled as he sat up, leaning on his arm. "Don't worry, my dear. I'll be gentle."

Not wasting a second of this opportunity, he placed his paw on the top of her head and slowly ran his fingers through her mane. He sighed internally at the softness of her hair and Fluttershy was once again surprised at his tender touch. She opened her eyes as he extended his strokes down her back and to her tail, but then relaxed and shut them again.

His touch was so soothing that it lulled her to sleep. When Discord noticed this, he was not sure what to do. He did not want to wake her, for fear of ruining the peaceful state she was in. He could always teleport her to her bed, but he did not want to leave her.

Even in sleep, she was fascinating. He could watch her like that forever, lying so still with only her body rising ever so slightly as she breathed. He would not dare move her, or leave her.

So he curled his body around her, like a dragon guarding its treasure. He continued to stare at her face, so it would be the last thing he would see before drifting off to sleep himself.

Just wanted to show you what was going on in the lives of the rest of the Mane 6 while Fluttershy's winning the heart of a draconequus.

Eeek! Writing this gave me butterflies! (no pun intended)

The Mirror

I originally had no idea where this chapter was going to lead to. Sometimes the story just flows naturally. Cookies to whoever spots the numerous *Beauty and the Beast* references in here! Actually, there are traces of several versions.

When Discord woke, Fluttershy was still asleep. Smiling, he caressed her face. *This is better than I imagined*, he thought. *Not only do I get a beautiful bride, but one who likes me! Oh, what a queen she will make!* He then had a fantasy of himself sitting on a throne, overlooking Equestria in its natural chaotic state, a smaller throne beside him, occupied by Fluttershy, dressed in a red and black gown, a jeweled crown on her head. She would look so radiant.

Fluttershy stirred as she started waking up. Discord retracted his paw and shut his eyes.

When she gained consciousness, the first thing she saw was the draconequus' face, supposedly asleep. She saw that his body had curled around her. She slowly tried to get off the cloud without waking him, but the draconequus decided to have some fun and used his tail to pull her closer.

Fluttershy was trapped. She considered waking Discord, but she did not want to be rude. Besides, his body was soft against her back. So she had no other choice but to make herself comfortable. As she did this, she heard a low chuckle. She turned to the draconequus, who opened his eyes suddenly.

"Good morning!"

She let out a shriek and jumped out of his hold. He only laughed harder.

"Did you sleep well, my dear?"

Fluttershy relaxed and replied, "Yes."

"No nightmares?"

"No...actually, I haven't slept that well in years."

She did have a dream involving the draconequus however, but kept this to herself.

"Splendid!"

He then summoned a plate of blueberry muffins for them to eat. As she took one, she thought of her pegasus friend, Derpy.

"I was thinking," Discord said while chewing, "maybe we could do something together, like ice skating."

Fluttershy choked on her muffin. "Ice skating?"

"Sure. It's fun! Or would you prefer something else?"

"N-no...ice skating would be...nice. It's just that I have to feed the animals..."

He snapped his fingers. "All taken care of."

"What's the hurry?"

"I just really want to go skating."

She did not know how to tell him. He just looked so excited at the idea that she did not want to disappoint him, as if she had not disappointed him enough already. She did not love him, but the least she could do was offer her friendship, and being his friend meant making compromises.

When they were done eating, he teleported them to the pond and froze it over. He then made a mismatched skating outfit complete with skates appear on his body and a sparkling red dress on Fluttershy's. She also had skates on each of her hooves and her hair tied up.

"Why red?" she asked.

"I thought it would look good on you," Discord smirked. "And I was right. Now come on! This ice isn't going to skate itself!"

As he began twirling on the frozen pond, Fluttershy looked down at it unsurely. She took a step onto the ice and tried to balance herself, but fell over after putting all four hooves down.

"Help?" she squeaked.

Seeing her plight, Discord glided over to her. He gently lifted her back onto her hooves. She hung her head in shame.

"I'm sorry," she uttered.

"For what?" Discord asked, scratching his head. "Every pony trips every now and then."

"It's not that. It's..."

"What? What's wrong?"

"You see, I don't..." The rest was inaudible.

"Come again?"

"I don't..." She trailed off again.

He leaned in closer, cupping his ear in his claw. "Didn't quite hear you."

"I...I..."

He lifted her chin. "Come now, Fluttershy. You can tell me anything."

She stared into his eyes for a while and then took a deep breath. "I don't know how to skate!"

He scoffed. "Oh, is that all? Why didn't you say so?"

"You're...you're not mad?"

"That you don't know how to skate? Don't be silly! That means I have the honor of teaching you! Oh, that is," he bowed dramatically, "if you would give me that honor."

She perked up. "Oh, that would be lovely!"

Discord tenderly took her front hooves, careful to avoid the blades, and then moved behind her.

"Okay, so basically what you're doing is walking on ice. Take a step forward and..."

He stopped as she let out a cry. She had tried to do what he had said only to have her hoof wobble, causing her to trip. Because she was in his arms, he caught her quickly. He then set her down on all fours.

"Maybe I should show you first." He skated in front of her. "Try it like this." He glided on one foot and said rhythmically, "One, two, three," and then switched to the other foot, "one, two, three... See? Now you try."

Fluttershy tried to step forward again, only to lose her balance again. Discord caught her immediately.

"Okay, in your case, you need to glide with *two* hooves at a time. Let's see, um...try starting with your front left leg and your back right leg and then the other two. That will help keep your balance. Don't worry if you fall. I promise I'll catch you."

Fluttershy gulped and followed his instructions, counting aloud, "One, two, three...one, two, three..."

"That's it!" Discord exclaimed. "Keep going!"

With every glide, Fluttershy became more confident. Her terror returned, however, as she drew near the edge of the pond.

"Discord!" she cried, returning to all fours. "How do I stop?!"

"Oh dear," Discord muttered. "Point your toes inward!"

"What toes?!" The edge was fast approaching. "At least tell me how to turn!"

"Simply turn your hooves!"

She tried to do this, but the blades got tangled in her tail. Discord slapped himself in the forehead.

"Oh for the love of... Hold on, I'm coming!"

Fluttershy shut her eyes and prepared for impact. Instead, she felt herself being lifted into the air. She opened her eyes to see that Discord was holding her above his head.

"You know what?" he said with a smirk. "I like it better when we do it together."

He set her down again, this time, keeping his hands on her shoulders.

"Now, to speed up, you keep your legs parallel to each other. To slow down, you point your front hooves slightly inward. Think of it like... French fries and pizza! French fries to go faster, pizza to slow down!"

It took her a while to see what he meant. If the blades were straight, like French fries, she would glide faster. If they made a sort of triangular shape, like a pizza, she would eventually slow to a stop. He then warned her not to rub the toes of the skates together, otherwise she would trip. Soon, she was skating with ease. She let out a yelp as he suddenly picked her up again and spun her around.

They skated together for a long time. Discord showed her a few tricks, but she only attempted those she did with him. At one point, she tried to spin, only to fall backward. Discord summoned up a snow bank for her to collapse into. Thanks to this, she landed softly. The draconequus laughed and fell next to her.

"You're *brilliant*, my dear!" he exclaimed, ruffling her hair. "A little rough around the edges, but brilliant, nonetheless!"

She blushed. "Thank you! That was so much fun! Pinkie always told

me skating was fun. If only she..."

She trailed off as her mind returned to her friends. Discord saw her smile disappear and clenched his teeth. *Oh, not this again!* He then spread his arms and legs out and moved them up and down against the snow.

"Look!" he said, getting up. "A snow angel!"

Fluttershy stood to take a look at his work. The figure was very distorted and looked nothing like an angel. Discord cringed at this, but said brightly:

"Well, angels are overrated."

They both giggled as they went back to skating.

The next few days went along smoothly. Now that Fluttershy was no longer afraid of Discord, the two could spend time more easily. He would still give her time alone with her animals, though he would watch from afar. He also kept his routine of asking his question each night. Although Fluttershy was beginning to like him, no romantic feelings were present, though she hated disappointing him so often.

Her mind would also wander to the friends she had left behind. She could barely look in her closet, for the clothes reminded her of Rarity. She could hardly read a book, for it reminded her of Twilight. The sight of an apple or rainbow would bring her to tears, and anything involving parties or desserts or the color pink would cause her grief.

Discord took notice of this, as her smile wavered every time she thought of her friends. He would then do whatever he could to bring that smile back, to distract her from the fact that she was imprisoned here and would never see another pony again. It would work for a little while but the sadness would always return.

One morning, she did not appear for breakfast. Discord assumed she was sleeping in and let it slide. When he passed by her room a few hours later, however, he heard sobbing. Concerned, he knocked

on the door.

"Fluttershy?"

The crying ceased, and in a cracked voice, she called, "Come in."

He peered inside to see Fluttershy on her bed, her back to him. He could hear a few sniffs coming from her.

"Is everything alright, my dear?" he inquired, making a cautious step forward. "You weren't at breakfast."

"I...I'm fine," she choked, rubbing her eyes. "I just...wasn't hungry."

As he came round the bed, Fluttershy tried to hide her tear streaked face, but he had already seen it.

"You've been crying," he stated.

Why was she still crying? He thought things had been going well between them. He had brought her animals, treated her respectfully, and yet she was still unhappy?

"No," Fluttershy denied. "I...I'm fine, really."

He placed his hands on her shoulders and spun her around to face him. "Don't you lie to me! Honesty may not be your Element, but don't lie! I *invented* lying!"

She let out a small whimper. Discord then realized how loud that was and patted her head apologetically.

"Sorry." She turned away from him as he sat beside her. "Come now, my dear. Tell me what's wrong."

Still looking down, she slowly rotated her head in his direction. "You...you won't get mad?"

He tilted her head up with his eagle claw and used his paw to brush her mane out of her face. "I promise. Just tell me what's troubling you, my dear, so I may know how to make you happy again."

She stared into his eyes, seeing them filled with concern and kindness, a look she would never have expected from the Lord of Chaos. It was as if he truly cared for her and wanted to comfort her. He could not do that without knowing the truth.

"I miss my friends!" she blurted.

Discord's eyebrow twitched and his mouth twisted into a curvy line, not sure how to respond. "Are you...are you not happy here?"

"No!" she insisted, placing her hoof on his paw. "No, it's not that! You've been so kind and I appreciate it, but..." She looked away, afraid of how he would react, but she had to say it. "You said you would do anything to make me happy."

"I did," Discord muttered guiltily.

"Then let me see my friends. Please? Just for a moment?"

She looked up at him with pleading eyes, filling up with another set of tears. He could not bear to see her so miserable, but he could not give her what she desired. If he let her go, even for a moment, she could take the opportunity to escape. No, she knew better than that and that he would bring her back. Her friends, however, could try and take her away from him or worse, convince her to use the Elements of Harmony against him. She was his only friend, and his intended queen. He could not lose her.

Yet he could not disappoint her either. If only there was a way to grant her wish without the risk of losing her. Then it struck him.

"Very well, my dear. I shall lift your sorrows."

A glimmer of hope appeared on her face. "You mean you'll let me see my friends?"

He cringed. "Well...sort of."

Discord snapped his fingers and a mirror materialized in his hand. "This is a magic mirror. Tell it what you want to see, and it will show it to you."

Fluttershy frowned as he placed the mirror in her hooves. "Oh, I...I thought..."

"This way, you can see your friends whenever you like without disturbing them! Oh, don't think you'll be intruding. They won't know. Try it out."

"Oh, okay. I'd like to see my friends please."

She waited, but there was nothing in the mirror but her own reflection.

"You'll have to be more specific," Discord explained.

"Oh, um...show me Applejack?"

The image blurred and soon her cowgirl friend was before her, preparing a pie in her kitchen. It lifted her spirits to see her.

"Thank you," she said softly.

He watched her face expectantly. *Come on, my dear, give a smile!* The one he got was hesitant and unsure, but it was a smile nonetheless. At least she had stopped crying.

"You're very welcome," he chimed. "Now, you up for breakfast?"

"I'm fine, thank you."

"Then I'll leave you to your business then. Will you come to lunch later?"

"Yes, thank you."

He grinned, taking one last look at her before shutting the door. Fluttershy repositioned herself on the bed and leaned back against her pillow as she watched the scene in the mirror. Applejack was slicing apples for her pie. Spike was standing there beside her.

"You sure you don't want me to help?" he asked.

Applejack cringed. "That's mighty nice of ya, Spike, but last time you

helped me bake a pie..."

"Come on, it wasn't that bad! Rarity liked it..."

"Yeah... Speakin' of which, shouldn't ya be helpin' her with somethin'? Not that I don't appreciate ya bein' here, but...ya know, since you and Rarity..."

Her face was becoming all pinched at the mention of Spike's crush on Rarity.

"Oh, right," the dragon mumbled, crossing his arms as he slumped to the floor. "About that...you remember Fancy Pants?"

"That hoity toity friend of Rarity's from Canterlot?"

"No, not Hoity Toity. *Fancy Pants*," Spike said with disdain.

"Yeah, I remember. He was the only one of them Canterlot folk who didn't insult our 'country ways.'"

"Well, he's here in Ponyville to visit Rarity."

"Really? That's mighty nice of him." She looked down at the dragon. "Does his being here bother you, Spike?"

"Rarity's been spending a lot more time with him. They had three dances at the Gala last week! And Rarity...talks about him a lot..."

"Ya think they might be courtin'?"

"No, I think they might be dating."

"Gee, I'm sorry to hear that, Spike."

Fluttershy could see that Applejack was trying to hide a smile, as if she knew such an expression would be inappropriate.

"Some things just aren't meant to be."

"Easy for you to say," the dragon murmured. "You don't know what it's like to care for someone who doesn't return your feelings!"

"You'd be surprised," Applejack mumbled.

"But still...I really thought...I mean she kissed me a few times and called me 'Spikey-Wikey.' I slaved away, doing everything I could to please her, and to think all this time she was leading me on!"

"I'm sure she didn't mean it like that, Sugar Cube. She probably just didn't want to hurt your feelings."

"You think so?"

"I know Rarity. She may not show it sometimes, but she is sensitive on how others feel."

When she was done preparing the pie, she put it in the oven. "Hey, if ya wanna get your mind off Rarity, how 'bout ya come with me to Canterlot tomorrow when I take these pies to the orphans?"

Spike perked up. "Really?"

"There are gonna be a lot of pies. I'll need a few extra hooves, err, claws."

"I think it's great that you're always helping those orphans."

Applejack blushed. "Well, since I'm an orphan myself, I feel it's my duty. Those colts and fillies don't have ponies like Granny Smith to take care of 'em. Until they do, we gotta make 'em happy."

"I never knew my parents," Spike said, looking down at his feet.

"But you've got Twilight." She chuckled slightly. "I guess that's somethin' else we have in common."

"What's the other thing?"

"A love for hard work."

Fluttershy now understood what Applejack was going through and was happy for her, yet a little sad for Spike.

"Hey Applejack, do you think...Fluttershy's okay?"

The pegasus' smile vanished.

"I...I think so," Applejack said weakly. "Zecora said she'll be okay, and...she can take care of herself..."

"You think he's married her by now?"

"I...I don't know..."

Fluttershy figured she should see what was going on between Rarity and Fancy Pants.

"Show me Rarity please," she said to the mirror.

The scene shifted to the café in Ponyville. The couple she had requested for was sitting at a table, looking at the menus.

"What do you think of Ponyville, Fancy Pants?" Rarity asked her companion with slight nervousness.

The stallion glanced around. "I find it charmingly rustic."

The mare breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm so glad you think so."

The waiter approached the table. "Have you made your selection?"

"What would you recommend, my dear?" Fancy Pants inquired Rarity.

"Oh, the sunflower salad is simply divine!"

"In that case, two orders!"

Fluttershy could not tell if they were courting, but they both seemed to be enjoying themselves. Then Fancy Pants asked a question that put a hole in the mirth.

"Now what's this I hear about your friend being engaged to the Lord of Chaos?"

Rarity's and Fluttershy's faces carried equal expressions at that moment.

"Yes, well..." the unicorn stammered. "You see...Discord wanted a bride and Fluttershy took the offer."

"How very brave of her."

"Oh, but it's been just terrible without her! She often takes Opalescence to get her groomed, and oh, the cat has been especially fussy lately. I would have gone instead of her, but Sweetie Belle...I just couldn't leave her..."

Fluttershy could listen no longer and decided to check on Rainbow Dash. Her oldest friend was flying with a male pegasus she did not recognize. He had a light blue coat, green eyes and a dark mane. His cutie mark was a lightning bolt with wings.

"So Soarin," Rainbow said, "where are we going, exactly?"

Now she remembered. He was on the Wonderbolt team. He looked different without his uniform.

"Someplace I thought you might like," Soarin replied cheerfully.

The clouds parted to reveal a floating hockey field, with two hovering goals facing each other and a puck flying between the two pegasi playing with sticks in their mouths. Several other pegasi watched from the sidelines while one of them operated a scoreboard.

"Air hockey?" Rainbow questioned. "This is your idea of a first date?"

"I was going to take you on a romantic picnic in the sky," Soarin explained, "but you didn't strike me as the romantic type."

"You're right," she giggled. "I'm not. Wait. What type *did* I strike you as?"

"You seem like the adventurous, outgoing type, kind of like Daring Do."

Rainbow gasped. " You read *Daring Do* ?!"

"I've read the whole series!"

She looked like she didn't believe him. "Which one's your favorite?"

"The first one: *Daring Do and the Quest for the Sapphire Stone*."

"Who was the villain?"

"Ahuizotl."

"Huh."

"What?"

"Nothing. Let's just play some hockey."

Fluttershy watched as the two went head to head. She rooted for Rainbow Dash, even though she could not hear her. Her cheers became loud and crazy when Rainbow scored the winning goal. Soarin was very impressed.

After calling a good game, the couple watched as the next two played.

"Thanks for taking me here," Rainbow said. "This is awesome!"

"I'll say!" Soarin exclaimed. "You've got some awesome game! I'm not even embarrassed at the fact that I just got beaten by a girl!"

She laughed and then sighed sadly.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. It's just...I wish Fluttershy was here to cheer me on."

Fluttershy was about to tear up again and asked to see Pinkie Pie. She was at Sugar Cube Corner, throwing a party. Apparently, it was Derpy's birthday. Fluttershy smiled to know that Pinkie was in her usual spirits. But as the energetic pony served the cake, tears suddenly filled her eyes.

"What's the matter?" Derpy asked.

Pinkie stared at the butter cream frosting. It took a second for Fluttershy to realize that it was the same color as her coat.

"I...I miss Fluttershy!" she wailed before the waterfall erupted.

Fluttershy quickly asked for Twilight. The alicorn was in the Ponyville library. Fluttershy wondered why she was there and not in Canterlot. She had a book open in front of her, but she was barely looking at it.

"Oh, Fluttershy," she said, sighing heavily. "Things haven't been the same without you. I can't help but blame myself. I hope...I hope that...whatever you're going through...you're okay. I miss you."

The pegasus sniffed. "I miss you too, Twilight. I miss all of you."

She then set the mirror face down and buried her face in her pillow.

Meanwhile, Discord lay sprawled upon his bed as it hung on the ceiling. In his own mirror, he had been watching Fluttershy watch her friends, but had muted it so not to invade her privacy too much. As she started weeping again, he pounded his fist on the bed.

"Come on!" he exclaimed.

He had tried so hard to make her happy, only to have her sad again. He did not understand it. He had taken the zebra's advice, he had swallowed his pride to please her, and still, she was unhappy!

His reflection then appeared in the mirror, laughing at Fluttershy's image.

"How wonderful!" it chimed. "And here I thought you had gone soft, but you still manage to bring misery to ponies!"

"Shut up!" Discord yelled, throwing a pillow at the mirror.

The reflection dodged it and Fluttershy's image rippled as the pillow made contact.

"Don't tell me you're *sympathizing* with this pony! Can't you see she's nothing but a whiny crybaby?"

The mirage ducked as another pillow was tossed.

"How dare you insult the mare I intend to make my queen?!" Discord hollered.

His reflection laughed. "That wimpy pegasus, your *queen* ?!"

The draconequus flew over and glared at his mirror image directly in the eye. "You call her that one more time and it's the junkyard for you! Understand?!"

"Ha! You think getting rid of this mirror will make me go away? Don't you see, old friend? I'm *never* going away! No matter how soft you try to be, no matter how many 'friends' you believe yourself to have, you will *always* be the Lord of Chaos!"

Discord punched his paw in the mirror, letting out a furious cry. He then saw his reflection, distorted from the cracked glass. It was true. He *was* the Lord of Chaos. How could he think he could make some pony happy, when it was in his nature to cause suffering?

He shielded his eyes from the horrifying image and sank to the floor. He did not hear the door open, or the dainty clomping of hooves. It was the light touch on his head that broke him out of his trance.

"Discord?"

He looked up suddenly and saw the lovely pegasus standing before him. He quickly faked a smile.

"Oh, hello there, Fluttershy! What can I do for you, my dear?"

She raised an eyebrow. "I think the question is what can I do for *you* ?"

He turned away. "Don't be silly, my dear. Your happiness is much more important than mine."

She walked up to him and put a hoof to his paw. He glanced down at it, as a knot formed in his stomach. She knew something was wrong, but did not question it, for she had already guessed.

"I know why you wanted a bride," she stated.

He bit his lip. "Um...I was bored?"

"You're lonely."

Discord scoffed. "What?! Don't be ridiculous! I'm the Master of Chaos!" He glanced at her nervously. "Why would I be lonely?"

"A thousand years, and you've never had one friend. Any pony would be lonely under those circumstances."

He looked away sadly. "I'm not a pony."

"That shouldn't matter. All creatures have feelings."

"Don't waste your pity on me. I'm not one of your fuzzy critters."

He met her eyes, and his heart tumbled inside his chest. He wondered if it was that Stare of hers, but no, this was something more powerful and probably unintentional. It was a look no one had given him before: a look of sympathy.

He sighed. He could not lie anymore.

"I will admit it is nice to have some pony to talk to. And..." He cupped her face in his claw. "I'm glad it was you who came."

She gave him a warm smile. "I'm kind of glad too."

"Although," he turned away, stroking his beard, "I think I would have preferred Pinkie Pie."

Fluttershy was shocked. "W-what?"

"Well, she does like my chocolate rain. Or maybe Celestia, you know? She is closer to my size. Maybe even Twilight..."

"B-b-but..."

"Got ya, didn't I?" he laughed, ruffling her hair. "I'm kidding! You should have seen the look on your face! You were so jealous!"

"I...I was not jealous," she stammered.

"Oh really? What if I told you I was exchanging you for another mare?"

"Well, you wouldn't...I mean, I..."

"See? Jealous!" He picked her up. "Don't worry, my dear. You're the only pony for me."

Fluttershy was struck dumb as he suddenly pulled her into a hug. She did not mind the gesture, though it surprised her. It was that last sentence that had caused her speechlessness. He had said it so cheerfully, yet not in a joking manner. And the way he was holding her now, so tight and yet so gentle, as if he neither wanted to crush her nor let her go, as if she were something precious. As he did this, she could not help but feel...safe, as if he would not let anything bad happen to her.

Discord seemed to think nothing odd of the action, though he was hesitant in pulling away. Fluttershy could have sworn he had a dreamy look in his eyes as he stared at her.

"Well, I'm hungry!" he said suddenly. "Why don't we have lunch outside?"

"S-sure," she stuttered. "Just...give me a moment to get ready."

His eyes glinted with excitement as he set her down. "Wonderful! I'll be waiting outside! Don't be too long, my dear!"

As he teleported out of the room, Fluttershy stood there, trying to process what had just happened. Her heart was racing at a speed that would challenge Rainbow Dash, something she did not think possible. Her face was so hot, she was sure it had turned red. And it was all because of how Discord had held her.

"Oh dear."

Wow. Small *Enchanted* reference at the end!

So that skating scene, in case you haven't guessed already, is a

reference to *Beauty and the Beast* as well as the original episode "Keep Calm and Flutter On." I remembered that in the Christmas sequel, Belle teaches the Beast how to skate. Here it's the other way around. Plus, I LOVE ice skating! Though...is that really how ponies skate? *shrugs*

I'll take one moment to express my opinion on the numerous pairings I have in here (aside from Fluttercord, you already know).

SpikexApplejack: I honestly think it could work. I have nothing against Rarity, except that she appears to take advantage of Spike's feelings. But after watching "Spike at Your Service," I couldn't help but think Spike should have a crush on Applejack instead. Not sure where it would lead to, but those are my thoughts.

RarityxFancy Pants: Well, for a "snob," he is a nice guy, and Rarity wants a gentlecolt in her life (certainly not Blueblood).

RainbowxSoarin: Um...only pairing I found with Rainbow Dash that wasn't with a girl, and that made sense. I'm not against that in real life, but I hate it when people are labeled as gay because of something silly, like if a girl acts like a guy. If they are gay, that's a different story, but it hurts when people think of you as something you're not. I know Rainbow Dash is a fictional character, but how would you feel if you were labeled as something you're not? I don't know, maybe I just don't understand slash pairings. (Update: I was a bit homophobic when I wrote this, only because I didn't understand, forgive me)

Okay, enough of my ramblings. You probably stopped reading a few lines back. So why am I still writing? Oh yeah...

Dun dun DUN!

No idea why I did that.

The Advice

Phew! Those exams weren't so bad...unfortunately they're not done! I have a week-long intermission until my next exam. I was in such a hurry to get this chapter done and it's not the best. I promise the next one will be better!

BTW, I'm bad at chapter titles...

The next day, Discord felt a disturbance in the force field and teleported to the front to see what was causing it. Knocking furiously on the invisible dome was Zecora.

"Oh, that's right!" he exclaimed. "I gave you an all-access pass."

Zecora shouted something. Discord cupped his ear.

"What?"

She pounded angrily on the wall. The draconequus chuckled.

"Oh, right."

He snapped his fingers and a hole appeared in the wall, allowing Zecora to slip through.

"Thank you," she muttered.

"So what brings you here, neighbor?" Discord asked cheerfully. "Come to borrow a cup of sugar?"

A cup of sugar materialized in his paw.

"Thank you, but the reason I came by was not for sugar, but for Fluttershy."

He twiddled his fingers. "Oh, um..."

"I simply want to talk, perhaps take a walk?"

"Must you speak in rhyme every single time? Oh great! Now you got me doing it! Though seriously, how do you manage that? Do you like rehearse in the morning? There is no way you could be improvising all of that. It's impressive, but..."

Zecora cleared her throat. "Fluttershy?"

"Oh, yes! She's in the garden. I've been following your advice, you see? I made her a garden, brought all her animal friends, and she hugged me afterwards!" He sighed. "You wouldn't believe how great things have been going! We're even friends! She said so herself! It's not quite what I had expected, but it means I'm one step closer to marrying that wonderful, beautiful..."

A laugh from the zebra reminded him of her presence. He blushed as he rubbed the back of his neck.

"Um, I mean..."

Thinking quickly, he snapped his fingers and teleported them to the garden. The pegasus was feeding the ducks

"Fluttershy!" Discord called.

She turned her head.

"You have a visitor."

She blinked in confusion. "Huh?"

Discord stepped aside to reveal the zebra. Even though she and Zecora were not that close, Fluttershy was thrilled to see a familiar face and rushed to embrace her.

"But I don't understand," she said as she pulled away. "I thought I wasn't allowed any visitors."

"Well," Discord said slowly as he tried to come up with an excuse. "Zecora is...an exception. After all, there's no harm in being neighborly. I'll leave you two alone then."

After he had vanished, Zecora smiled at Fluttershy.

"I am glad to see that you are well, my dear, but I am afraid it is the concern of your friends that have brought me here."

The pegasus gasped. "Are they alright?"

"They worry for you, and I will admit I did too. And this is why you must tell. Does Discord treat you well?"

"You'd be surprised at how kind he's been!" She gestured to their surroundings. "Look at what he's done!"

"Hmm," Zecora mused. "I told you he was not as bad, but tell me. Does he make you glad?"

"Oh, yes! You were right. So far I've been happy, except..."

She looked down, her hair falling over her eye. Zecora lifted her chin up.

"What is troubling you, dear? What makes you unhappy here?"

"Well," she stammered. "I miss my friends. He won't let me visit them." She sighed. "I appreciate everything he's done to make me comfortable, but..." She gazed up at the sky. "Sometimes I feel like I'm still his prisoner. There's also the fact that he..."

She trailed off. Zecora raised an eyebrow.

"What?"

Fluttershy glanced up at her. "You won't tell any pony?"

"My lips are sealed. Your secret won't be revealed."

She breathed. "I...I think he's in love with me."

She waited for Zecora's reaction, but she did not look the least surprised. This confused her, but Fluttershy had to get all of this off her chest and she hoped Discord was not listening.

"Every night, he asks me if I love him."

"Do you?"

She hesitated. "I always say no. We made a deal. I will not marry him until I say yes. I thought it was just a game at first, but...he's been so gentle, and every time I say no, he looks hurt. And...the way he touches me...it doesn't upset me, but...I just...I..."

As she trailed off, Zecora grinned. "It is as I had said. A yearn for love is what has led Discord to taking a bride. This he tries to hide."

She gulped. "I...I suppose I *could* love him, if he wasn't so... possessive of me." She looked at the zebra in desperation. "You understand, my friends can't know about this! They have enough to worry about! Just tell them I'm alright and that I'm not married yet."

"That I will do, so they may not worry for you. But now I must be off, as there is a pony with a terrible cough."

"Oh goodness. Well, I wouldn't want to keep you from your customers. I just wish..."

"You had more company? I understand. Though you live comfortably, and Discord makes it so, you wish for your friends to show."

She said nothing for a while, so Zecora took her cue to leave and nearly fell off the edge of the garden. Discord then appeared beside her with an awkward smile.

"Whoops," he said. "Forgot to tell you about that."

He snapped his fingers and teleported them to the ground. He knelt down and whispered to her.

"Did she say anything about me?"

She smirked. "I am not at liberty to say. Now I must be on my way."

"Come on! Can't you at least tell me if she likes me? At least...do you *think* she does?"

She sighed. "These things take time, dear draconequus. The advice

I give you is this: love is a splendid thing to feel, and only time will reveal whether it is meant to be. If you truly love something, set it free."

As the zebra trudged through the forest, Discord pulled at his mane. "Ugh! More riddles!"

Now he knew how he had made the ponies feel in the labyrinth.

Discord watched from his usual hiding place in the tree as Fluttershy continued to feed the animals. Although he could finish the job with a snap of his fingers, he simply enjoyed watching her animal magnetism at work.

She was trying to convince Angel to eat a carrot.

"Come on, Angel," she begged softly. "Just one little bite?"

The rabbit shook his head violently.

"How about a teeny nibble?"

He shook his head again and kicked the carrot away. Fluttershy glared at him and then opened her eyes as wide as she could, giving him that Stare of hers. Angel was intimidated by it and swallowed his carrot whole.

"Amazing," Discord murmured.

To think that such a pony with no magic at her disposal could possess such a power, especially one so seemingly innocent! While the Stare scared most creatures, it attracted this one. This small chaotic quality of hers fascinated him, as did everything else about her. He was so close to winning his queen. He just had to step up his game.

"Come on, what can I do for her? Flowers? Chocolates?"

"How about you stop spying on me?"

Discord shrieked in surprise, causing him to fall out of the tree. He looked up to see a cross Fluttershy.

"Exactly how much privacy do I actually get?"

The draconequus laughed nervously. "Well, um..."

"Have you got nothing better to do with your time?"

"Um...no? Well, I'd rather be spending my time with you..."

"Then why didn't you say so?"

"I...you see...um..." He groaned. "I got nothing."

He waited for her scolding, or whining, or even that Stare, but she laughed instead. He looked up at her in confusion.

"You're not mad about me invading your privacy?"

"Mad?" she said. "Discord, this isn't the first time I've caught you. It's a little disconcerting, but I'm not mad. Besides, now that you're in the clear, you can help me feed the animals."

"No problem!"

He stood up and readied his fingers, but Fluttershy flew up and pressed her hooves against his paw, shaking her head.

"I want you to feed them from your paw."

He blinked. "You mean...walk right up to them and...expect them not to run away? To accept food from *me*?" He threw up his hands. "No offense, my dear, but count me out!"

"Won't you at least give it a try?"

"I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm not 'one with nature' like you. Those things will run away at the sight of me. They're smart enough to do so."

He glanced at her as she placed some acorns in his paw. "Well, I think it's time we changed that, don't you?"

She pointed towards a group of squirrels. Discord stared at her, then at the acorns, then at the squirrels, and then at her again. She gestured toward the animals again, sternly narrowing her eyes. He sighed.

"Oh, alright!"

The things he did for this pony!

Sighing again, he advanced towards the squirrels. "Alright, you little rascals! Lunchtime!"

The critters squeaked as he knelt down to them and they raced into a hole in a tree. Discord glanced back at Fluttershy.

"What did I tell you?"

She giggled as she glided to his side. "You need to be gentler." She took some of the acorns from his paw. "Here, watch me."

You know I will, he thought as she floated to the tree.

"Shhh," she whispered. "It's okay."

At the sound of her voice, the squirrels poked their heads out.

"There's nothing to be scared of. Discord's not going to hurt you."

She then set the acorns down at the tree's base and stepped back. In a few seconds, the squirrels climbed down and stuffed the acorns into their mouths. Some smaller squirrels then appeared and tried to get acorns themselves, but could not get to the pile. Fluttershy then nodded towards Discord and gestured for him to kneel down. He shook his head. She narrowed her eyes and pointed her hoof commandingly at the squirrels. He shook his head again insistently. Fluttershy gritted her teeth and stuck her hoof in the back of his shoulders, urging him to kneel. He shook his head once more, this time violently.

Fluttershy could not control her Stare and angrily used it on him. He simply smirked and waved it off. She then turned away from him and sniffed. This caught Discord's attention. He peered over at her face

and saw tears forming in her eyes.

"Oh please don't," he muttered.

She then faced him, shooting those big, glassy blue green eyes at him. Unlike her Stare, this look affected him tremendously. He grunted and knelt down to the squirrels, causing Fluttershy to smile.

The squirrels stiffened at the sight of him, but did not run away immediately. He stuck out his paw, showing them the acorns inside. They stared at the treats and then at him. Discord rolled his eyes.

"They're not poisoned, if that's what you're thinking!"

Fluttershy put her hoof on his paw and gently pushed downward, signaling for him to set the acorns on the ground. He did so and the squirrels took them and fled.

"There," Discord stated bluntly. "I fed them. May I go now?"

"Oh no you don't, mister," Fluttershy insisted. "There are plenty more animals that need feeding."

He stamped his goat hoof. "Oh, come on! Can't I just snap my fingers? It will make the job easier!"

"No! No magic! You have to learn to be kind to the animals!"

"I'm the Lord of Chaos! I don't have to be *kind* to anything!"

"Please, Discord?"

"Why should I...?"

He trailed off as she tenderly took his paw and stared at him with those pleading eyes. "For me?"

Oh, those eyes... He grunted. "Ugh! Fine! But you owe me for this!"

She grinned and gave him a handful of birdseed and pointed towards a flock of birds pecking at the ground. Discord gulped and made his attempt. They flew further away with every step he took

toward them.

He was about to give up when Fluttershy flew down to him and took a small amount of the seed out of his paw and onto the ground in front of him. One bird pecked at the seed curiously and then flew into Discord's hands to get the rest. The draconequus widened his eyes and looked at the pegasus.

"See?" she said. "All you have to do is show them they can trust you."

He glanced down as more birds hopped into his hands. "Well, they shouldn't. I could squash them with one clap of my hands, you know?"

"But you wouldn't do that."

"And why wouldn't I?"

"Because if you do, I'll never speak to you again."

This caused him to shout. "What?!"

His outburst frightened the birds off of him and he dropped what was left of the birdseed.

"Now see here, pegasus! You can't boss Discord around like this! / make the rules around here! Are you trying to make a fool out of me?!"

He paused as one of the birds returned and landed on his head.

"Get off of me!" he bellowed, scaring it away.

Fluttershy laughed, which made Discord soften a bit. He then reflected on what had just happened and started laughing himself.

"I looked ridiculous, didn't I?"

She shook her head. "No. It was cute."

He blinked at her. "Cute?"

"Does that offend you?"

"No! It's just that..." He glanced down at his feet. "No pony's called me 'cute' before."

He would never admit this aloud, but he kind of liked it.

As she forced him to feed the rest of the animals, Discord was beginning to question his pride. Here he was, offering food to fluffy creatures all to please one measly pony? Had he really gone from being the Lord of Chaos to a sappy pushover? These thoughts running through his head and the fluffy critters pawing at him made him want to explode, but one glance at the pegasus' sweet, beautiful face calmed him down every time.

When they were finished, Fluttershy gave Discord a hug, which literally tied his stomach into knots. He had to subtly snap his tail feathers to untie them.

"Thank you, Discord," she said. "You were a big help."

She started to pull away, but he wrapped his arms around her and held her a while longer. Fluttershy blinked up at him.

"Um...you can let go of me now, Discord. Discord?"

"Hmm? Oh, right!" He reluctantly released her. "But first, my dear, you have to pay up."

She tilted her head. "Pay up?"

He crossed his arms. "You forced me into feeding those creatures, now you have to do something for me!"

She stared at him and then shrugged. "I suppose that's fair. What do you want me to do?"

Discord thought for a moment and then smiled smugly at her. "Would you sing for me, dear?"

Fluttershy stiffened, her wings folding up as she collapsed to the ground. "S-Sing?!"

He coiled himself around her. "I simply *love* the sound of your voice!"

"Oh but...I can't sing..."

"Don't be ridiculous!" He ran his claw under her chin. "You were magnificent at the gala!"

"But...not while you're...watching..."

"Come now, my dear. It's only me." He tilted her head towards him. "Just this once. I'll never ask you again."

She looked away, her hair falling over her eye. "...I'm not prepared..."

"Don't talk," he said, putting a finger to her lips. "Sing."

"But what song should I...?"

"Sing!"

"I really don't..."

"You *owe* me!"

Fluttershy gulped as he leaned toward her.

"There's no need for you to be nervous, Fluttershy. I won't laugh at you."

She inhaled deeply and began to sing:

" *Hush now, quiet now*

It's time to lay your sleepy head

Hush now, quiet now

It's time to go to bed... "

Discord interrupted her. "Don't sing a lullaby, it makes me sleepy."

"Sorry, but I'm not sure what to..."

"Sing that song you sang at the gala. That was rather good."

Gulping once more, she sang again. She was startled when backup vocals came from nowhere. She turned to see the birds singing actual words. She became even more confused when music started playing. She looked at Discord, who gave her a wink.

As she continued to sing, Fluttershy became more confident. Discord watched in awe, his ears taking in that melodious voice of hers. He could not understand why a sound like that could be so alluring to him. In fact, he could not understand why everything about this pony allured him. Before him stood what he thought to be the embodiment of perfection, not to mention one of the Elements of Harmony. Aside from that Stare, she had nothing to do with chaos. Maybe that is why he found her so interesting, because there were chaotic features such as that waiting to be uncovered. That and the fact that she was nothing like him in character.

During the instrumental, Discord made a bold move and tapped Fluttershy on the shoulder. He held out his claw. After staring at it for a while, she slowly took it. He lifted her hoof over her head and twirled her around. He then pulled her in and led the dance. Fluttershy thought back to when he had done this at the Grand Galloping Gala. That dance had been forceful, and while this one moved at a similar pace, it was gentler. She felt like they were dancing on air, which was actually true, since they were hovering above the ground.

As the birds sang the bridge, Discord twirled her faster and Fluttershy was getting so dizzy that even though there was nothing to trip over, she stumbled. Discord caught her in a dip, just as the birds had sung: "*Can any pony find me...?*" Then everything was silent.

She opened her eyes, meeting his, and absentmindedly finished the line: "*Some pony to...loooooove.*"

The music started up again and the birds continued: " *Find me... some pony...tooooo love!* "

The two were locked in each other's gaze for a long while, until Discord slowly brought her up to his eye level. He gently brushed her mane back, so he could get a better look at her face. Before either of them knew it, the distance between them was decreasing as he pulled her nearer to him and they closed their eyes.

Their lips were only inches away when Fluttershy opened her eyes again and realized what was happening. She gently pushed his face away and laughed awkwardly.

"Uh..."

Discord opened his eyes and gave an equally embarrassed laugh.

"Well, um..."

Fluttershy removed his hands from her body and held them out in front of her. "Are we, um...even?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah! That was..." He met her eyes again. "Lovely."

They stared at each other awkwardly for a while, until Fluttershy looked down and rubbed her arm.

"I...um...I have to go to the bathroom!"

Discord watched her fly away and sighed sadly. That night, he did not bother asking the question.

Whoa. That didn't go as I had planned. Discord has ideas of his own!

The Story

Wow, had serious writer's block for a while. Anyway, this chapter was partly inspired by the fanfic "The Chaotic Beginning" by DreaminginReality. Yeah, wasn't so creative with Discord's origin.

"Discord, may I ask you something?"

The draconequus had just finished showing Fluttershy his water skiing tricks and was drying off.

"Anything, my dear," he said over his shoulder.

She looked down at the blanket she was sitting on. "Well...I've been here for three weeks and..."

He made his towel disappear and teleported to her side. "Yes?"

"Well...there's something that's been on my mind and..."

He scooted closer to her. "Go on?"

"I...I just want to know..."

A ray of hope appeared on Discord's face. Was she finally going to say it? But she said it was a question. Still, was this it?!

She looked up at him. "Where did you come from?"

His expression fell. "Oh...I see. Well my dear, when a male draconequus and female draconequus fall in love..."

"That's not what I meant."

He sighed. "I know. I warn you though. It's not a cheery tale."

Fluttershy lay on her belly. "I'm listening."

Discord smiled and took a breath. "I wasn't always the only one of my kind. I had a mother and father like every creature had. There was a land filled with draconeqi, but there were very few of us even then. I was only a few years old when it happened..."

"What happened?"

He paused. "It's all a blur. All I remember is lots of snow and ice. It must have been abnormal weather if not even the draconeqi could control it. At some point I got separated from my parents and I woke up one morning to find myself in a cave. I survived on chocolate milk and cotton candy. Our magic starts at an early age, you see. After a while, the blizzard ended and I started off on my own."

He made another pause before continuing. "I'll spare you the details. Let's just say that it didn't take long for me to realize that I was different from most creatures. I searched everywhere for other draconeqi but found none. When I figured that I was the only one left, I tried to fit in with the other animals, but they were either frightened of me or found me ridiculous.

"Then I found Equestria and you ponies, and...well, let's just say they didn't take kindly to my appearance either. I eventually gave up trying to fit in and focused on my magic, making myself at home in a cave in the mountains."

"Was it that cave you took me from?" Fluttershy interjected.

"Yes, in fact. You know Celestia has stopped by there several times to see if I was hiding there? I made myself invisible whenever she came."

"How did she know you were there?"

"Because she found me there. You know, before her dye job. She saw me practicing my magic and might I add, she was quite impressed with it. She said I should use my talents for good. Well..." he twiddled his fingers, "she wasn't very specific on her definition of 'good.'"

He gave a small laugh. "I guess I may have disrupted a few

banquets and rained out a couple of parades... It was after I had *accidentally* turned the roads into soap and lots of ponies called me a freak that things got out of hand. You know, I don't like being called a 'freak.' Even Celestia was angry with me. I just got angry back. So I took over Equestria and...well, you know the rest."

Fluttershy was silent for a while. "What was it like being in stone?"

He hesitated. "Cold, dark, but you're still aware of your surroundings. I *heard* those comments from the tourists! My head is *not* like a donkey's!"

"Did it hurt? The stone, I mean."

"Um...not physically, though I've had my share of defacers, graffitiists and pigeons. At least Celestia had the decency to have me washed once a week! If only I had someone to scratch my nose..."

He trailed off and stared into space.

"You really are alone, aren't you?"

Discord looked down at her. "Yes. Yes, I was. Not anymore, now that you're here."

He used his tail to bring her closer, making Fluttershy blush.

"You know I don't even remember what they looked like?" he said suddenly. "My parents. I don't remember a thing about them."

Fluttershy hung her head. "Well...I don't have parents either..."

He looked at her with wide eyes. In all his years of spying, how could he have missed that significant detail?

"What happened?"

Her lip quivered. "I never knew my father, and my mother passed away a few years ago." She looked up at him. "I suppose we're more alike than we thought."

Discord gasped. "We are?"

"You see..." She glanced down at her hooves. "I was very shy as a filly and could barely fly. All the other ponies laughed at me."

He choked. "They laughed at *you* ?! Tell me their names! I'll make them suffer!"

She giggled. "Don't do that. It was a long time ago. Anyway, I know what it's like to be...different. And I know how lonely that can be." She paused. "Also, I was almost turned to stone once by a cockatrice."

"You *what* ?! How did you escape?"

"Well...my Stare..."

He blinked. "Seriously? You stared down a *cockatrice* ?!"

"Um...yes."

Fluttershy squeaked as he threw his arms around her. "Beauty, grace, talent *and* a stare that defies the laws of nature?! You're just the whole package, aren't you?"

She gently tried to push him away. "Discord, please..."

"Did you not hear me, darling? I'm saying you're perfect!"

Her cheeks turned red. "Discord..."

"Is there something in your ear?" He stuck his claw in her ear. "Let's see..."

"Discord, what are you...?"

She gasped as he pulled out a red thornless rose.

"Well, would you look at that? No wonder you couldn't hear! Hmm, almost as beautiful as the pony it came from."

Fluttershy stared at the flower as he placed it in her hooves.

"It *is* lovely," she said, inhaling the scent.

"It's nothing compared to you. After all, what could rival your beauty?" She stiffened as he laid his hands on her shoulders and whispered in her ear. "Nothing, that's what."

She laughed nervously. "That's really flattering and all, but..."

"Come now, my dear. Why do you think I'm so intent on making you mine?"

"But I already agreed to..."

"You know what I mean, which is why I will ask again. Do you love me, Fluttershy?"

There it was. She should have known it was coming. He had been more persistent lately. Last night, he had prepared a candlelit dinner before asking. She turned to face him and was unsure of what to say. She didn't know what was wrong with her. Usually she would say no immediately, but it had become harder and harder for her to say it. The hopeful look on his face made it even more difficult. She glanced back at the rose. It *had* been a sweet gesture, and the poor dear *had* been alone all his life. How could she reject him after hearing all of that?

Was that why he had told it to her? Was he taking advantage of her pity? Was any of it even true? He would not lie to her, would he?

True or not, Fluttershy knew he was lonely and that he seemed to care for her, but she could not do it. She might as well be saying 'I do' at the altar. She was not ready.

Fluttershy shut her eyes and turned away. "No, Discord."

The draconequus moved away from her. Fluttershy saw the twitch in his eye.

"Are you alright?"

"Oh, don't worry about me! I'm fine!" He gritted his teeth. "Just *perfect*!"

"I was this close!" Discord shouted to his mirror. " *This* close! I try to be nice, I tell her my secrets, I say she is the most beautiful creature on the planet *repeatedly* and she *still* rejects me!" He pounded on the glass. "What am I doing wrong?!" He gazed at his reflection, waiting for it to talk back, but it continued to copy his movements. He let out a sigh.

"Be patient, Discord. You've at least gotten *somewhere* with that pony. She'll say yes eventually. You just need to up your approach."

The next day, when Fluttershy was feeding the birds, she looked up at the sky to see writing in it: *Do you love me?* Discord appeared two seconds later with a bouquet of tulips in his paw. For a while, she did nothing but glance between him, the tulips and the message. Then she solemnly shook her head.

The following evening, Discord laid two deck chairs out on the balcony and created a fireworks display. Fluttershy was in awe until the same question exploded into the sky. Looking at his expectant face, she was almost compelled to say yes, while her conscience said no, but she could not find the courage to say either. When she turned away from him, Discord did not need to hear the answer and sank sadly into his chair.

The next morning she found another bouquet of tulips and a heart-shaped box in front of her door. In the bouquet was a note reading: *Only the most beautiful of flowers for the most beautiful of ponies.* She sat on her bed and opened the box to reveal some chocolates and another note: *Do you love me?*

She sighed and allowed the note to fall to the ground. Discord materialized beside her, his arms crossed and his face filled with frustration.

"How long do I have to wait?"

She looked up at him in alarm. "Discord..."

"How *long* ?!"

Fluttershy choked on her words. "I...I..."

"Have you lost all knowledge of speech that you can't even say a polite 'no' anymore?!"

"Discord, I'm sorry, but..."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" he said, mimicking her voice. "How many times are you going to say that? Until my two-thousandth birthday?!"

Tears were developing in her eyes. "I didn't...I just..."

"Do you not like it here?"

"No, I..."

"Is the castle too drafty?"

"Uh..."

"Is it my breath?"

"Dis..."

"Oh, I get it! It's my looks, isn't it?! Or maybe it's my age! You'd prefer some young, handsome stallion, right?! I'm just too different for you, huh?"

"Discord!" Fluttershy shouted. "Your looks have nothing to do with this!"

"Then why?!" he demanded. "I've given you everything you could want, swallowed my pride for you, and told you things I've never told any pony!" He picked up the bouquet. "Why? Why do you still reject my affections?!"

"Because you treat me like a prisoner!"

His face fell as she snapped at him. Fluttershy then took a breath and moved towards the window.

"I understand you don't want me to leave and that we had a deal, but...if you were really my friend, you wouldn't keep me like a caged bird. You've tried so hard to make me happy, but you still deny me

the one thing I want." She glanced out as some of her birds tried to fly into the forest but were stopped by the force field. "Now I'm treating my friends the same way."

She hung her head in shame. Discord continued to hold onto his anger.

"Well, you've denied me the one thing I want, and what I want is..."

His frustration melted away when he saw the tears streaming down her cheeks. He cautiously stepped toward her.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. "I didn't mean to ..."

He lightly touched her mane, only to have her pull away.

"Fluttershy..."

She faced him. "I want to let them go."

He blinked. "What?"

Fluttershy glanced back at the animals outside. "It would be selfish of me to keep them here. They're not here because they need me. I thought they did, but...I just wanted them here for myself."

Discord put his claw on her shoulder. "That's why I brought them here. For *you*."

"And now I want you to send them back."

"But...don't they make you happy?"

"Look at them." She pointed at the birds pecking at the invisible wall. "They don't want to stay here. That's why you have to send them back."

He stared at her for a while, wiping away her tears. "You sure this is what you want?"

She looked up at him and nodded.

Hate to end it there, but it was getting close to my usual chapter length and I have a lot planned for the next.

So Fluttershy has no parents in here. It's based on the fact that she's the only one of the Mane 6 whose family we haven't seen! I mean we even saw Rainbow's dad in a flashback! Besides, if she did have living family members in this story, there would be more ponies worrying about her to write about.

That rose in her ear, I've wanted to put that in here for ages! The original idea was in the early drafts of the story. I'm glad I put it somewhere!

And oh ugh, another *Beauty and the Beast* reference!

The Date

YES! EXAMS ARE DONE! EXAMS ARE DONE! OH YEAH!

finishes victory dance and returns to keyboard

Sorry, I'm just so relieved it's all over and I can finish this! It took time to get this one just right.

"The portal's ready," Discord said after conjuring a swirling red void.

All the animals were gathered in front of the portal, staring at it questioningly. The draconequus looked to Fluttershy.

"Are you ready?"

She inhaled deeply. "Yes." She turned to the crowd of creatures.

"My friends, I know some of you are unhappy here and wish to go, so...I'm giving you a chance. This portal here will take you anywhere you want."

There was much chatter among the animals.

"Don't worry about me. I love every one of you, but...you can't stay here for my sake, not forever. I...I'll be fine."

After hearing some more chirping, Fluttershy hung her head.

"No...you won't see me again if you leave."

Angel stepped forth and pointed towards Discord.

"He won't hurt me. Really, I can take care of myself."

The animals she had been friends with for years squeaked in protest.

"You can take care of yourselves as well. You did fine without me

before, you'll be fine without me now. You...you don't need me anymore." She floated to the ground. "The portal's there. The choice is yours."

For a while, the animals stood there, wondering what to do. Then a few headed towards the portal. Fluttershy turned away, unable to watch. She could hear the electric noise as the animals stepped through the void. She tried to hold back the tears, but it was no use. She ran to the nearest tree and buried her face in her hooves and began weeping.

After a while, she could no longer hear any chirps, squeaks or grunts. She did not need to turn around to know that they were all gone now. Then she felt something soft patting her head. She looked up and saw Angel smiling at her. Other animals surrounded her, some badgers, squirrels birds, ducks and mice who had stayed behind.

"But..." she stammered. "I don't understand..."

They all chimed in unison, as if to say: " *We're not going anywhere* ."

She sniffed. "Thank you, friends."

But she could not help but weep for the animals that had left. After closing the portal, Discord cautiously approached his fiancé. He got a few angry glares from the animals, but Fluttershy raised her hoof, assuring that it was alright. Still glaring at the draconequus, they slowly broke apart. Discord knelt down to her.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah," she choked.

"That was...very brave of you."

"I know. I just...can't help..."

She buried her face in his fur and cried. Discord slowly wrapped his arms around her and stroked her mane.

"Shhh," he whispered. "There, there. They're happy now, aren't

they? That should make *you* happy, right?"

"I suppose," she sobbed.

"No more tears then."

He took her face in his hands and wiped away her tears. He had to think of a way to cheer her up. Then it hit him.

"How about I take you out to dinner tonight?"

Fluttershy blinked in confusion. "Out?"

He nodded with a grin.

"You mean...outside the castle?"

"Well, I understand if you're not up for it..."

"No! That would be wonderful."

"I'll see you at seven, then?" She nodded as he pulled away. "Oh and why don't we make this a formal occasion? So wear something nice."

"Alright. Tonight then."

Discord watched his mirror as it showed Cheerilee and Big Macintosh on another date.

"How does he do it?" he wondered aloud. "The boy hardly says a word and still manages to win the girl over. Meanwhile, I've been courting this pony for almost a month and we still haven't gotten past the 'friend' level."

It was clear that his current tactics weren't getting him anywhere. He had to try something different tonight. That's why he was watching the pony couple, to see what he could use. They were having lunch at a café, sharing a milkshake with two straws.

"So how was the harvest today?" Cheerilee asked her date.

"Tough," was all Big Mac said.

"I know how it is. My class was noisy this morning." She glanced at the clock tower. "Ooh, speaking of which, I better get back to the school. See you tonight?"

"Yup," the red stallion nodded.

Before standing up, Cheerilee leaned over and gave him a peck on the lips. Discord's eyes widened at this action. *Of course! Why didn't I think of it before?!*

Now he knew he had to make this night perfect.

Fluttershy was pacing around her room, Angel standing impatiently on her bed.

"Ooh, what should I wear?" She held up a green dress in front of the mirror. "This one? No." She picked up a blue dress. "This one? No." The next was red. "Maybe? Oh, where's Rarity when you need her?!"

Angel thumped his foot on the bed to get her attention. She turned to him as he squealed.

"Why am I so nervous? Oh, I don't know! I just...want to look nice for him..."

The rabbit glared at her, as if to say: " *Why should you bother looking good for that creep?* "

"Oh, Angel, he's tried so hard to impress me. The least I can do is to make an effort as well. I know you don't like him, but believe me when I say he's not as bad as you think. You wouldn't be here with me if it weren't for him."

Angel snorted. " *You wouldn't be here in the first place if it weren't for him!* "

"The wedding is going to happen, Angel. There's nothing I can do

but *try* to love him. I'm going to be here forever whether I marry him or not."

The bunny turned away in a huff. Fluttershy sighed and flew over to the vanity. As she gazed in the mirror, she thought of all the times Discord had called her beautiful. Although she would never admit it, just being with him made her feel beautiful. That's why she had to look her best tonight.

She did not know where these thoughts were coming from. Since when did she care so much about her appearance? *Because he thinks I'm beautiful*, she thought, *and I have to be beautiful just for him*.

Fluttershy spun around to face Angel. "Can you at least help me pick out a dress?"

The rabbit stared at her for a moment, then hopped down and began rummaging through the closet.

Discord spent the rest of the day searching for other couples in Equestria to learn from and also did some digging into Fluttershy's past, watching it all in the mirror. His favorite part was seeing Fluttershy flip out at the Grand Galloping Gala three years ago. It made her all the more interesting.

It was now five minutes to seven and Discord was making last minute adjustments to his appearance. The tuxedo he had summoned made him feel ridiculous, but he had a girl to impress, so he was willing to suffer whatever pain to do so. He could do nothing to improve his physical appearance, however. He was able to change form, but he had figured out long ago that no matter what he turned into, part of his deformed figure would remain. For instance, if he turned into a pony, the antler and horn would still be on his head, his eyes yellow and red, his bushy eyebrows and beard, all reminders of what he was. There was no use changing anyway if Fluttershy knew of his true self.

"Okay, Discord," he said to his reflection. "You can do this. You can

do this!"

He licked his paw and slicked his mane back, only to have it pop back up. He sighed in defeat.

"Oh, who am I kidding? I can't do this! Discord, wake up and smell the hummus! She's the most beautiful creature in the world and I'm..." he looked in the mirror and sighed again, "...not worthy of her."

He slumped to the ground. "What's the use? Even if she's already engaged to me, she'll never really want me. I might as well give up."

As Discord wallowed in his misery, he thought back to when she had called him her friend for the first time. She had said it without hesitation and had snuggled up to him without a trace of fright. *Maybe...just maybe...*

The draconequus blinked away the tears and stood tall. "This is no time to sulk, Discord! There's a beautiful mare waiting for you and you're going to sweep her off her feet!"

He teleported outside of Fluttershy's bedroom and was about to knock when a thought occurred to him.

"Hold on. If you're going to do this, do it right!"

He summoned a bouquet of roses and straightened his tux. He then knocked on the door and heard the angelic voice from inside: "One minute!"

As he waited, Discord started sweating.

"Alright, no need to be nervous," he muttered to himself. "Just one girl. Just one amazing, beautiful...my, it's hot in here." He tugged at his collar. "You can do this. Whatever you do, don't look like a..."

"Discord?"

He was so distracted he had not heard the door open. He quickly straightened himself up and forced a smile.

"Fluttershy! You ready to...?"

He stopped at the extraordinary sight before him and nearly dropped the bouquet. She wore a golden dress, roses and vines embroidered along the skirt. Her hair was tied into a long ponytail hanging loosely over her shoulder. She wore only a little makeup that gave her face a slight glow. When she looked up at him, her teal eyes seemed to sparkle.

"Is everything alright?"

Discord opened his mouth, but no words came out. Fluttershy glanced down at her attire.

"Is it too much? I can change, if you'd like."

"No!" he blurted. Then he pulled himself together and cleared his throat. "You look...amazing."

She turned away with a blush. Discord then remembered the bouquet and handed it to her.

"For you, my dear."

Fluttershy took the flowers with a smile. "Thank you, but...I'm all out of vases..."

"I'll fix that."

He snapped his fingers and a new dresser appeared in her room, a vase on top. The roses then floated over to it and settled themselves inside. Discord had an idea and made one of the roses come back. He bent down to Fluttershy and fixed the flower into her hair. He took a step back to admire her.

"It suits you."

Fluttershy blushed again. "You're too sweet. So where are we going?"

Discord turned his back to her and crouched down. "Hop on and I'll show you!"

Her eyes widened. "You mean...climb on your back?"

"Yes, we're flying there!"

"Oh but...I can fly by myself..."

"Well, where's the fun in that? Besides, I don't want you to wear your precious wings out, my dear."

"Um...okay."

She hesitantly crawled onto Discord's back and locked her hooves around his neck. The draconequus turned around and opened one of the windows.

"Hold on tight," he whispered to his passenger.

He unfolded his wings and raced towards the window. Fluttershy shut her eyes and let out a squeak as he launched into the air.

"Woo hoo!" Discord cried. "Fluttershy, you've got to look at this view!"

His only response was a whimper. He turned his head to see the pegasus burying her face into his neck. He raised an eyebrow.

"You can look, you know?"

"But it's so..." Fluttershy stammered, "...high."

"Oh come on! Don't tell me you're afraid of heights! You're a pegasus for crying out loud!"

"It's um...not of heights, it's of...falling."

"You have wings! How can you...?" Discord sighed. "Look, if you fall, I'll catch you, alright? I promise."

Fluttershy stopped shuddering. He was right. She was being ridiculous. Hesitantly, she opened her eyes and glanced down at the Everfree Forest below her. She immediately closed her eyes again.

"Are we going to land soon?" she pleaded.

The draconequus rolled his eyes. "Alright, hold your horses!" He snickered. "Get it? Hold your *horses* ?!" He waited for a laugh, but got a whine instead. "Fine. Ooh, there's a good spot!"

He slowly descended into a large clearing in the wood. He snapped his fingers and turned to the shivering pony on his back.

"It's okay. You can let go now."

Fluttershy opened her eyes and floated to the ground. She glanced at their surroundings and gasped at the sight of a table draped in a white cloth with a candle in the middle. Two covered dishes were set in front of two cushioned dining chairs. As a last minute touch, Discord summoned a violin, playing softly by itself in midair. He bowed to his date, gently taking her hoof.

"Shall we, my dear?"

She giggled as he lightly kissed her hoof. He then ushered her to one of the chairs, holding it out for her as she sat down and pushed it back in. Fluttershy was impressed at what a gentleman he was being.

"And what would my dear, sweet Fluttershy like to eat?" Discord inquired as he seated himself.

"Um...salad?"

"I know just the thing!"

He snapped his fingers and when Fluttershy lifted the cover of her dish, she saw a bowl of bright green leaves with no stems, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, feta cheese and ranch dressing. It was just the way she liked it. She had stopped asking how he found out about these things.

Discord had a chocolate milkshake, though as he sipped through the straw, the glass disappeared rather than the liquid. Again, Fluttershy knew better not to question the Spirit of Chaos.

"This was really nice of you," she said with a smile.

"Well," he chuckled, "I think we've both been cooped up in that castle for too long. Besides, it is lovely out here!"

She gazed into the darkness of the trees. "What if a Timberwolf or something shows up?"

He waved his paw nonchalantly. "Please, I'm the scariest thing you'll find in this forest."

She looked at him shyly. "I don't think you're scary."

Discord tried to contain his joy at hearing her say that. "Well, there you go! Nothing else should frighten you then!"

"Oh...um...I'm not brave..."

"Um, hello? Is this the same pony who sacrificed herself to save her country? You can't get braver than *that* !" He paused. "I've always wondered, by the way. What made you decide to accept my deal?"

Fluttershy glanced down at her plate. "Well...I...you see...I had to save the princesses and...I've always wanted to be brave. I guess that was my chance."

He leaned forward onto his claw. "What about your friends?"

She winced at the mention of them. "Well...they wouldn't have been better off spending an eternity in darkness."

Seeing her saddened expression, Discord realized he had to change the subject and fast. "Well, out with the old and in with the new, I always say!"

"When did you ever say that?"

"Just now!"

He summoned them each a wine glass, filling them with grape juice. He raised his glass.

"A toast to the future!"

Fluttershy gave him a small smile and clinked her glass with his. It was only now that she started growing suspicious. They had had a candlelit dinner before, but dressing up, playing romantic music and talking about the future? Not only that, but they were out in the open where someone might see them. He was up to something.

When she had finished eating, the violin started playing a rendition of "Some Pony to Love."

"You hear that, dear?" Discord said. "They're playing our song!"

He teleported beside her and bowed. "May I have this dance?"

She stared at his open paw for a while and then slowly took it. In a flash, the clearing had turned into a marble pavilion, the columns decorated in flowered vines, candles illuminating the tiled floor. He led her to the middle and pulled her close.

He twirled her around as he had done the first time they danced, until the song changed.

"Hmm," Discord mused. "This one's a bit slower. Oh well, might as well comply with the maestro."

"But you..." Fluttershy was about to say, but was cut short as he snaked his paw around her waist and gently took her hoof in his claw.

Now he's leading me in a waltz? He's definitely up to something.

Neither of them noticed the alicorn flying above them. Princess Luna was making her nightly rounds when she spotted the pavilion, knowing it had not been there the night before. She cautiously flew closer and gasped seeing Fluttershy in the arms of the monster! She was about to charge toward them when she heard the music playing from a violin missing its musician.

This was a direct violation of the agreement made! Discord was not supposed to create his chaos outside of the castle ruins! This meant he no longer had right to his claim on Fluttershy! Twilight Sparkle had passed on the message that she was not yet his wife. Luna now had the chance to rescue the pony.

She made ready to charge, but then looked at the scene more closely. Discord was *dancing* with the pegasus! And she showed no resistance! Curious as to what was going on, Luna dove behind some bushes and watched.

The waltz was difficult for Discord, because Fluttershy was so much smaller than him. He could not hold his arm outward without straining her foreleg, which is why he turned and dipped her as much as he could. Eventually, he found a solution and placed his claw on her waist along with his paw, bringing them closer together.

"Where did you learn to dance like this?" Fluttershy inquired as he dipped her again.

He smirked as he slowly brought her back up. "You'd be surprised how much you can learn watching from afar."

She glanced around nervously. "Discord, what is this all a...?"

"Shhh," he whispered, putting a finger to her lips. "No words, my dear. Let's just enjoy this beautiful night."

Luna could not believe what she was seeing. It was hard enough with Discord dancing the waltz, but since when did he compliment on her night?

She did not understand why the pegasus was so calm. She was in the arms of the creature who had stolen her away to be his bride. What had happened in the past month that made her suddenly unafraid of him? She had to be under a spell, but Luna could sense that sort of enchantment and there was none on Fluttershy.

The pegasus was not the only one who seemed different. Discord's eyes never left Fluttershy and he was gentle with every movement he made with her. Also, what he had created out here was not his usual wacky construction. Everything was orderly, even the tuxedo he was wearing. A *tuxedo* ! His voice was different as well, softer and kinder. This was not the draconequeus Luna had helped turn to stone.

It had to have been an act. He was pulling this charade to seduce

the pegasus. That had to be it!

Then something shocking happened. As they were turning slowly, Fluttershy laid her head onto Discord's chest. He looked just as surprised as Luna was. Then his expression turned into a smile and he tenderly stroked his partner's mane, staring at her dreamily.

Luna's jaw dropped. She knew that look. Could it be that the Lord of Chaos was in...?

She shook the idea out of her mind. No, it was impossible! With a heart as stone cold as his, there was no way he could be capable of such an emotion! Creatures like him could never change!

Then again, who was she to judge someone in such a manner? She of all ponies should know better than to label someone as completely evil. She had been wondering why Discord had demanded a bride. Seeing the way he was looking at Fluttershy right now helped her to comprehend.

A thousand years, he had suffered alone, as did she. The difference between them was that Luna had her sister. Discord had no one to let him in, until now, it seemed. So was this genuine?

When the song ended, Discord summoned a stone bench right in front of Luna's hiding place. The princess ducked as he led Fluttershy over. She decided to let this offense slide and teleported out of there before she could be spotted.

The two sat there awkwardly for a while, waiting for the other to break the ice. They stole glances at each other, but looked away before the other could notice. Fluttershy smoothed out her dress while Discord rubbed the back of his neck before looking at her again. After a few minutes, she finally caught him.

"What are you staring at?" she asked quietly.

Discord smirked as if the answer was obvious. "Why you, of course."

A chill ran down her spine as he reached out and brushed his claw against her cheek.

"So beautiful," he whispered.

Fluttershy kindly pushed his claw away. "Is that all you can say?"

He blinked in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Don't get me wrong. I'm flattered, but..." She looked away. "Is that the only reason you like me? That you think I'm a pretty face?"

"Oh, Fluttershy, no! How can you say that?" He took her hooves.

"First of all, your face is not *pretty*, it's *beautiful* and second, I don't *think* you're beautiful, you *are* beautiful! Of course I admire you for it, but that's not the only reason. You're gentle, kind, brave, you have a lovely voice, your Stare practically turns me on..." Discord winced.

"Forget that last part. The point is that I find everything about you fascinating."

Fluttershy blushed slightly. "That's very sweet."

He curved his body around her, placing his hands on her shoulders. "I speak the truth, my dear. You are *everything* I could ever ask for."

She closed her eyes as he leisurely ran his fingers through her hair. His face was so close that she could feel his warm breath. A month ago, this would have frightened her, but now, she just wanted him to keep stroking her, soothing her, whispering these things in her ear. Whenever he was around, she felt safe and secure, beautiful and important, cared for and adored.

"Fluttershy," Discord whispered.

"Mmm-hmm?" she uttered absent-mindedly.

"Might I ask you a teensy question? It's not the usual one!"

"Mmm-hmm."

He turned her head towards him. "May I kiss you?"

Fluttershy opened her eyes in shock. "What?"

He quickly moved away from her. "Sorry, I...I've just never kissed

anyone before and...since we're friends, you wouldn't mind..."

"Okay," she replied weakly.

"You know, just this once, and...wait. What was that?"

She breathed and boldly faced him. "One k-k-kiss w-wouldn't hurt."

Discord stared at her as she shut her eyes and waited. For a moment, he hesitated. He was not expecting for her to actually cooperate. This might be his only chance.

He gently took her face in his hands and leaned forward. *What if she doesn't enjoy it? What if she hates me for the rest of my life? What are you waiting for? Do it now!*

He panicked and kissed her on the forehead before quickly pulling away. Fluttershy opened her eyes in confusion.

"Discord," she said slowly, "are you...nervous?"

He scoffed. "Nervous? W-why should I be nervous?"

"It's okay. I'm nervous too."

The draconequus blinked. "You are?"

She hung her head. "Well...I've never been kissed either and...if I'm never going to meet any pony else in my life..." She trailed off and looked back up at him. "I won't mind. Go ahead."

Discord gulped. "Um...alright. Here it goes."

She closed her eyes as he leaned toward her again. He was only an inch away from her lips when his panic returned. When nothing happened for a while, Fluttershy closed the gap between them, causing Discord's eyes to widen in shock. Unbeknownst to him, his pupils became heart shaped and after a few seconds, his eyelids slid closed.

Never in his existence had he experienced such a thing as wondrous as this. He did not want it to end, but she broke away too

soon. Fluttershy glanced off to the side, while Discord recovered from his stupor.

"That was..." he stammered.

"...nice," she finished.

Neither of them said anything for a while.

"How about another dance?" he asked suddenly.

After dancing a few more songs, Fluttershy let out a yawn.

"Are you alright, my dear?"

She nodded. "I'm just tired. Can we go home now?"

He grinned at the fact that she had called his castle 'home' and scooped her into his arms. "Of course, my sweet."

They disappeared in a flash, along with the pavilion, returning it to the clearing it was before. They reappeared in front of Fluttershy's bedroom.

"Do you want me to tuck you in?"

"No, thank you," the pegasus said, flying out of his arms. "Thank you for tonight. It was lovely."

She surprised him with a peck on the cheek. "Good night."

"Sleep well, my sweet," Discord said, putting a hand where she had kissed him.

She did not take his eyes off him until the door was shut. Discord then teleported to his room and cried, "Yes!"

He brought the bed down so it could catch him as he collapsed. He had just kissed the most beautiful pony in the world and she was one step closer to finally becoming his.

After replaying the events of the evening in his head, his grin slowly disappeared as realization hit him.

There was no use denying it anymore.

"I've fallen in love with her."

AWWWWW!

The Visit

You can all sue me later! I have excuses! First, I had to make a video for my graduating class, and then there was International Day at school which I couldn't miss, and oh yeah, I was making my entry for the PMV Today Contest (in case you didn't know, I have a YouTube channel under the same username) which BTW revolves around Fluttershy and Discord! Finally, I got stuck. There were so many versions of this chapter in my head that it took me a while to choose one.

One more thing, as of today, this is the most reviews I have gotten on ANY fanfic (101)! Thank you for your continuing support!

When Fluttershy awoke, she could not help but think she had forgotten something. She could not put her hoof on it, but something about today felt different, like something important was supposed to happen.

At that moment, Discord appeared at her bedside with a tray of food.

"Happy Birthday, my dear!"

She slapped herself in the forehead. "Of course."

He set the tray onto her lap. "Breakfast in bed! Hope you're in the mood for pancakes."

"Oh, you didn't have to do anything for me, Discord," she said with a smile.

"Come now, your birth is definitely worth celebrating! Now eat up! I have lots more planned for your special day!"

He vanished and returned once she had finished eating. The next thing she knew she was dressed in a robe and sitting in a sauna.

Discord, wearing a pink fluffy robe, stretched out beside her.

"Ah, nothing like a good steam bath to help you forget your troubles."

"You really didn't have to..."

He raised his paw. "Relax, my dear! Unwind yourself!"

Now that she thought about it, she had not been in a sauna since her last get-together with Rarity. Her chance to relax was long overdue. So Fluttershy closed her eyes and leaned her back against the wall, letting the steam sink into her skin. After a while, she opened her eyes to see Discord staring down at her with a wide grin on his face.

"What?" she said.

Discord straightened up. "Nothing! I just..."

"Maybe we've been in here for too long. You're sweating."

He wiped the incriminating droplets off his brow. "Yes! On to the next part of the treatment!"

A snap of his fingers transformed the sauna into a bath of a gooey green substance. Fluttershy recognized it as the crystal mud from the Crystal Empire. She had not had the chance to try it while she was there, and sitting in it now confirmed that it was as refreshing as Cadence had said. She laughed as she remembered that day when they were welcoming the inspector for the Equestria Games, only to find out that they had gotten the wrong pony. She and her friends had always wound up in the craziest of situations.

Discord was confused as her sudden laughter turned into a frown.

"What's wrong, my dear? Is the mud too warm? Are you not comfortable with me in here?"

"No," Fluttershy sighed.

"Then what?"

"It's nothing, really."

He snapped his fingers. "I know what you need! A massage!"

The mud bath disappeared, and Fluttershy found herself lying on a massage table.

"Really Discord, none of this is necessary, I just want..."

She trailed off as she felt the draconequus' hands gently rub her shoulders. In a second, her eyelids slid shut as she relaxed on the table.

"Why so tense, my dear? There something on your mind?"

Fluttershy was about to answer, but was lulled by his tender touch that all that came out was a sigh. After massaging her for half an hour, Discord teleported them both to the gazebo.

"Now for your gift."

Fluttershy raised an eyebrow. "The spa treatment wasn't it?"

"No, that was a bonus. I have something more special in mind."

He seated her on a bench and lifted the ring around her neck.

"I'll bet this thing has given you some distress."

"A little," she muttered.

She had nearly forgotten she was still wearing that.

"Well, I just want you to know that...I don't want you to feel like you're being forced into this, and...for what it's worth...I...I can't imagine being with any other pony, so..."

He curled around her and pointed a gleaming finger to the ring, engraving words into it. Once the writing had stopped glowing, Fluttershy squinted to read it.

" *To my one and only Fluttershy* ." She blinked. "I...I don't know what to say."

"Say you love me," Discord muttered.

"What?"

Instead of responding, he teleported in front of her with a birthday cake in his hands.

"Make a wish!" he exclaimed, holding it out to Fluttershy. "And as it is your birthday, it will be my duty to make it come true!"

That caught her attention. "You promise?"

"Cross my heart," he said, making the gesture.

Fluttershy closed her eyes and blew out the candles.

"So what will it be, my sweet?"

She was about to comment on him calling her 'his sweet,' but she had something more important to say, even though it would upset him.

"I wish to visit my friends."

As she had predicted, Discord's face fell. "Sweetheart, I thought we talked about this..."

She crossed her hooves. "No, we haven't. And I think it's time we did."

He laughed nervously. "Isn't there something else you'd like? How about a necklace? That ring doesn't quite match your eyes."

Fluttershy shook her head. "I want to visit my friends, nothing more, nothing less."

He set the cake down and laid his hands on her shoulders.

"Darling..." She turned her head from him. "It's been a month now! They've probably forgotten all about you!"

She gasped. "How can you say such a thing?"

"Oh, it's not that you're easy to forget, sweetie! It's just that ponies

have terrible memories...oh, not you!"

She hovered over him. "You promised you would grant whatever wish I made!"

"You didn't get it in writing!"

"It shouldn't matter! Friends honor promises! If you can't honor yours, then you're no friend of mine!"

"I *am* your friend, Fluttershy!"

"Then *why* ?!" She spun around, revealing her water filled eyes. "Why won't you let me see my friends?"

"Oh, please don't cry! You know I don't like it when you cry!"

"You want me to stop crying? Let me see my friends!" Her commanding then turned into begging. "Please? Just for the day? I promise I'll come right back, and if I don't, you can bring me back with your magic. In fact, you wouldn't have to. You can trust me."

"I *do* trust you, Fluttershy." He clenched his teeth. "Your *friends* , however..."

Now she was beginning to understand. "You think they're going to take me away."

He rubbed the back of his neck. "That, and..."

"How about this? Instead of letting me go to them, you'll let them come here."

"What?! No, no, no, no, no! I'm *not* bringing those meddlesome ponies to my lair!"

"Not even for one day? It is my birthday, after all."

"No! Never!"

He crossed his arms and turned away from her. Fluttershy had to think of some way to convince him. She knew that Pinkie would

especially be upset today, since she usually threw her birthday party. Then it occurred to her. It was dangerous, but if that's what it took to see her friends, then she was willing to risk it.

"If you never allow my friends to visit, who are my bridesmaids going to be?"

Discord's ears perked up. "Brides...?"

"And I promised Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo they would be my flower girls, and Spike, the ring bearer, and...well, you need some pony to perform the service and Twilight has the authority now..."

"Wait, back up!" he interrupted, facing her. "Are you saying...?"

She took a deep breath. "If you will allow my friends to visit me whenever I request, I will...I will let you decide the wedding date." She looked up at him boldly. "And I won't argue."

Discord was speechless, not believing what he was hearing. This had to be a dream, or at least a trick, but he was awake and Fluttershy was not one to kid. Oh, she wanted to see her friends so badly, just as badly as he wanted her. What else could he do? He did not want to disappoint her and this was his chance to have her at last.

He tapped his chin, pretending to think about it. "How does..." he grinned slyly at her, " *tomorrow* sound?"

Fluttershy gasped. "T-t-to..."

"Uh-uh-uh!" he exclaimed, waving his finger. "You said you wouldn't argue! Unless you've changed your mind about seeing your friends..."

"No! I..." She sighed. "Tomorrow it is."

She squeaked as he suddenly took her in his arms. "Oh, thank you! You've made me the happiest creature in the world, my dear! Now, do you think I should wear a tux or...?"

Fluttershy tried to pull away, but his grip was too strong. "Discord, my friends?"

He groaned as he released her. "Oh, right."

The five ponies, along with Spike and the former Cutie Mark Crusaders, were at Sugar Cube Corner. Pinkie Pie was in a state of depression, her hair flat and her coat a shade darker. She was sitting on her bed, sobbing her eyes out.

"Come on, Pinkie, this is getting ridiculous!" Rainbow exclaimed. "You've been crying for hours! You're gonna flood the place!"

"It's Fluttershy's birthday!" Pinkie cried. "I had a big party planned for her! It was going to be out in her garden! I was going to surprise her!" She pulled out a wrapped gift from under her bed. "I was going to give this to her! Now I'll never know if she'll like it!"

Applejack laid a hoof on her shoulder. "We miss her too, Pinkie, but we just have to accept..."

"How can we accept that our best friend is gone for good? We're never gonna see her again! Worst of all, she's never gonna see her birthday present!"

Suddenly, Spike burped up a letter. When he opened it, he gasped.

"It's Discord again!"

"What?!" every pony shrieked, huddling around him.

"What does it say, Spike?" Twilight inquired.

The dragon cleared his throat. " *You are cordially invited to Fluttershy's birthday party at Discord's castle. Starting now.* "

The next thing they knew, all nine of them were standing in front of a dark castle.

"What in tarnation?" Applejack and Apple Bloom said at the same

time.

Sweetie Belle squealed as she backed off the edge. Scootaloo caught her before she could fall.

"Where are we?" Twilight wondered.

Rarity cringed as she looked up at the castle. "Whoever lives here should seriously get a new decorator."

"This is Discord's place," Applejack explained.

"Oh, well that makes sense."

"I'm not supposed to make sense!"

Everyone turned around in shock to see the draconequus standing over them. Rainbow Dash growled, getting ready to pounce.

"Where's Fluttershy, you jerk?!"

Discord rolled his eyes. "Well, I *was* going to let you see her, but if *that's* the way you're going to behave..."

The pegasus blinked. "Wait, what?"

"Didn't you get the invitation?"

He tugged the parchment out of Spike's claw using his magic. Pinkie leaned forward to read it again.

"You mean...?" she glanced down at the present, which she was still holding. Her eyes grew big and then her hair inflated into its natural poofy style. "BIRTHDAY PARTY!"

As she screamed, she launched into the air and fireworks exploded behind her. Discord scratched his head. *How does she do that?* Pinkie then rushed to the front door, bursting it open.

"Hey!" Discord cried. "You can't just...!"

"Discord?" Fluttershy called as she entered the main hall. "Are they...?"

"FLUTTERSHY!"

Pinkie tackled her into a hug, giving Fluttershy no chance to escape. The others trotted inside and gasped at the sight of their friend.

"Fluttershy!" Rarity exclaimed. "You're alright!"

They then all moved into a group hug.

"Girls! Spike!" Fluttershy said, tears coming into her eyes. "I missed you so much! I..." She choked as Pinkie squeezed tighter. "Can't... breathe..."

"Oops!" the pink pony blushed, backing away with the others. "Sorry, I just can't believe it's you! I thought I'd never see you again and that you'd never get to see what I got you for your birthday..." She gasped dramatically. "Your birthday! Quick, close your eyes!"

"Why do I have to...?"

She was cut off as Pinkie tied a blindfold around her head. "One second!"

Fluttershy heard a few blasts before the cloth was removed. The room was now walled with balloons, streamers and other party decorations.

"How did you...?" she started to ask, but she already knew the answer.

"I never go anywhere without my party cannon!" Pinkie chimed, bringing the object into view.

She strapped a birthday hat onto Fluttershy's head and then started up the gramophone.

"Let's party!"

But instead of dancing, the ponies fed Fluttershy a million questions.

"Has he hurt you?" Rarity asked.

"How are the animals?" inquired Applejack.

"Did the Stare work on him this time?" asked Scootaloo. "He seems different."

"How do you not get dizzy in here?" Rainbow questioned, glancing around the distorted room.

"Are you married yet?" Sweetie Belle asked, looking at the engagement ring.

"Does he make it rain chocolate rain every day?!" Pinkie inquired eagerly.

"Whoa, girls!" Twilight exclaimed, silencing them. "Give her some space!"

Fluttershy summed it up. "No, he has not hurt me and we're not married yet. Actually, Discord's treated me quite well. He's really... sweet."

Rainbow Dash raised an eyebrow. "You've *got* to be kidding me."

"He let you come visit me, didn't he?"

"Well, yeah, but...he...I..."

Twilight giggled, trying to lighten the mood. "What does it matter? It's Fluttershy's birthday. We should be celebrating!"

The alicorn began her awkward dancing, which everyone stared at for a while. Then they shrugged and danced themselves. In between songs, Fluttershy received updates on every pony's lives.

Rainbow Dash had gone on three more dates with Soarin, and she admitted that he was cooler than she had thought.

"I mean I've always thought he was cool because he's a Wonderbolt, but we've never hung out socially, alone, that is; so I've never gotten to know the real him. Seriously, we talk about things I've never talked about with a boy, like *Daring Do* and our favorite flying tricks! He also doesn't mind when I beat him at air hockey!"

"So I've heard," Fluttershy chuckled.

"Huh?"

"So is he your very special some pony now?"

The blue pegasus rubbed her arm in a manner completely unlike herself. "Uh...it's kind of early for that, isn't it?"

"Well," Rarity interjected, "I've been spending some time with Fancy Pants. I think he might be taking an interest in me, if you know what I mean."

"What about Spike?" Applejack suddenly asked.

"What about him?"

The earth pony glanced at the dragon on the other side of the room grooving with Sweetie Belle, Apple Bloom and Scootaloo. "Well... you know he kind of likes you, ya know?"

Rarity gulped. "I...I..."

"Who wants to play Pin the Tail on the Pony?" Pinkie called, throwing a blindfold around Fluttershy's eyes again. "Birthday girl goes first!"

As the afternoon went on, Fluttershy enjoyed her friends' company as they played more games and caught up with one another. It was after the third round of Twister that she noticed Discord sitting in the corner with his head down. She suddenly felt guilty that she had ignored him all this time and had not even thanked him.

She excused herself from her friends and flew up to him.

"Thank you, Discord," she said with a smile, "for bringing my friends here."

His expression changed at the sight of her. "You're welcome."

"You don't have to sit here all day. Why don't you join us?"

"I think your *friends* ," he pointed at the ponies glaring at them, "would not appreciate that."

She was about to say something when he slid his arm around her. "Have you told them yet?"

Fluttershy blinked. "Told them what?"

He chuckled, playfully twirling the ring on her neck. "Have you really forgotten already?"

She looked down at the ring and blushed. "Oh."

She had been so excited about seeing her friends, she had forgotten the reason they were here in the first place.

"N-no, I..."

"Well, you should, my dear. You wanted them to be here, right?"

"I...it's just..."

They were interrupted by Pinkie, who had bravely approached the draconequus. "Hey, Discord! You wanna play Twister with us?"

He stared at the pink pony, shocked at the invitation and then stood up. "Alright, but I warn you, I'm the world champ!"

Pinkie snorted. "As if!"

"Is that a challenge?"

"Only if you're up for it!"

"Oh, it's on!"

Before following the pony, he turned back to his fiancé. "You have to tell them at some point, my dear."

Only Pinkie and the three fillies were bold enough to go against Discord in Twister. Thanks to his long snake-like body he was able to defeat them with ease. While Pinkie called for best two out of three, Fluttershy pulled Applejack aside. Since she was the one she

had confided in before, she felt more confident telling her first.

"I'm glad to see you're gettin' along fine, Sugar Cube," the southern pony said. "I don't know what you've been doin' the past month, but Discord seems a might different. I'm surprised he let us come here."

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about, Applejack," Fluttershy whispered. "You see, the reason he brought you here is...um..."

"Because it's your birthday?"

"No...well, sort of, but...it...it took more to convince him to...I really wanted to see you and it was the only way and..."

Applejack laid a hoof on her shoulder. "Take it easy, Sugar. Whatever you have to say, say it."

She took a deep breath. "I...I want you to be my bridesmaids."

"Oh, um...great?"

"And the wedding's tomorrow!"

Silence fell over the room and Fluttershy realized that she had shouted that last part. Pinkie fell from her position and Discord pumped his fist.

"Yes! Victory!" He then noticed the glares he was receiving. "Oh, come on, don't be sore losers!"

"You're marrying him *tomorrow*?" Rarity uttered.

"Oh, so you've told them!" He teleported to his fiancé's side and threw his arm around her. "Yes, our big day is tomorrow and you're all invited! The four of you can be bridesmaids, the brats, err, kids can be the flower girls, the dragon can be the ring bear or whatever it is and Princess Prissy here can perform the service!"

Twilight's jaw dropped in horror. "You want me to...to...marry you two?!"

"Why the glum faces? I thought you loved weddings!"

"Um, Discord?" Fluttershy said softly. "Could you let me talk to them?"

"Oh, sure, go ahead! Who's stopping you?"

" *Alone* ?"

His smile disappeared as he looked at the heated and shocked expressions on the ponies' faces. He threw up his hands.

"Fine! I can take a hint! Though really, I don't see what you're so upset about, you all knew this was coming!" Fluttershy cleared her throat. "Yes, yes, I'm going!"

Once he had vanished, Fluttershy floated down to her friends.

"That was awfully rude of you."

"Rude?!" every pony exclaimed.

"You're marrying that monster tomorrow!" Rarity cried. "How do you expect us to react?"

"But you know I'm engaged to him," Fluttershy pointed out.

"We didn't..." Rainbow stammered. "We didn't expect it to happen *now* ! And...now you want us to be a *part* of it?!"

"I thought you'd want to come to my wedding."

"Not when it means watching you get married to a monster!"

Fluttershy stomped her hoof defensively. "He's not a monster!"

"He took you away from us!"

"No, I *chose* to go with him! Girls, you have to believe me, it's not as bad as you think..."

"How can marrying the Lord of Chaos be *good* ?" Rarity insisted.

"And Fluttershy," Twilight shuddered, "I can't be the one to tie you to that..."

"Don't say it!" Fluttershy shouted. "He's not a monster! In fact, he's been nothing but a gentleman since I got here and you should be grateful that he even let you come to my birthday!"

"What's gotten into you, Fluttershy?" Rainbow demanded. "Why do you keep defending him?"

"Because he's my friend! He may have done terrible things in the past, but that doesn't make him evil! He's just a lonely creature who wants nothing more than some pony to love him. After all, he's been asking me every single day if I..."

She trailed off and realized that she had already said too much. Applejack raised an eyebrow at her flushed cheeks, more flushed than usual. She knew that look.

"Are you...in love with him?"

Rarity huffed. "Don't be ridiculous, Applejack, how could Fluttershy love a hideous monster like Discord?"

"Yeah," Rainbow laughed. "Especially one who keeps her locked up!"

"He's fun and all," Pinkie chimed, "but you can't really..."

"I think it would be romantic," Sweetie Belle sighed. "A beauty falling in love with a beast."

"You need to get your head examined, Sweetie Belle," Scootaloo taunted.

Fluttershy had been silent as she listened to her friends in horror. "How...how can you say such things?"

"We're just kidding around, Flutters," Rainbow snickered. "I mean we all know you're not in love with him!" When her friend said nothing, Rainbow narrowed her eyes at her. "Right?"

She could barely utter a word. "I...I..."

"Fluttershy, you can't be serious! He tried to take over Equestria!

Three times!"

"He practically keeps you prisoner!" Rarity insisted.

"He threatened the princesses *and* my unborn niece!" Twilight yelled.

"He beat me at Twister!" Pinkie shouted.

Every pony stared at her for a moment, and then back at Fluttershy.

"How can you love such a monster?" Rainbow demanded.

"He's *not* a monster!" Fluttershy insisted. "He only wants me to love him!"

"Well, do you?"

She was on the verge of crying, her teeth grinding together. She had never felt so frustrated in all her life. She wanted to scream, to deny everything. But no, she could not.

"Well, Fluttershy? *Do* you love him?"

"What does it matter?! " she snapped. "You're right! He *does* keep me prisoner, he did all those things you said! I don't *want* to marry him tomorrow, but do you think I have a choice?! It was the only way I could convince him to bring you here! And you know what? Who cares?! Who cares if the wedding is tomorrow or next year? I made a deal with him, and it's going to happen whether I like it or not!"

"So you don't...?"

"No! I don't love him!"

As her words echoed throughout the room, Fluttershy's heart sank. Her friends lost their anger as tears streamed down her face. Twilight held out her hoof.

"Fluttershy, we..."

She ran past them to her room, slamming the door behind her.

"Fluttershy, we didn't mean..." Rainbow called, but Applejack pulled on her tail before she could fly after her.

"Haven't y'all done enough?"

"Us?" Rarity questioned. "I don't understand what..."

"Of course ya don't understand!" Applejack snapped. "You of all ponies wouldn't understand! You talk about romance all the time, but you wouldn't know love if it was starin' you right in the face!" She turned to the others. "That goes for all of ya!"

"AJ," Spike started to say. "What are you talking...?"

"Especially you!"

Without another word, the farm girl rushed outside, her younger sister following her. The others were left in a haze, unsure of what had just happened.

"But..." Pinkie stuttered, looking down at the box in her hooves, "she didn't open her present yet."

Fluttershy sobbed into her pillow, angry at herself for all of the horrible things she had just said. She had not meant any of it, not even the last part. She did love Discord, in a way, but even she was not sure of her exact feelings. Still, how could she say that after he had tried so hard to be her friend when he clearly wanted more? She just could not stand to admit it to the others that there was a slight possibility that she could return his feelings. Maybe not now, but in the future, she would be ready to say that she loved him, even if their wedding was tomorrow.

But part of what she had said was true, and this upset her more. She had no choice in the matter. She was bound to him, and there was nothing she could do about it. There was no use stalling anymore. Discord wanted her, and that's what he was going to get.

She heard a grunt and looked up to see the draconequus standing over her. Despite the circumstances, she was happy to see him, for

now he was here to comfort her. Her joy died, however, once she saw his face overwhelmed with hurt and anger. His hands were clenched into fists, and his eyes were glaring at her with disgust.

"You know? You really had me fooled for a moment."

hides from rotten tomatoes and cupcakes

Hey, I hate myself for this chapter too, but the fluff had to end somewhere!

The Relapse

washes cupcake frosting out of hair

Wow, you guys have good aim (especially you, Kia!). I have a feeling there's more of that to come, so...

hides behind barricade

Oh yeah, you should read Rosethetheif's "Sweet Temptation." It inspired part of this.

"How much did you hear?"

"Every word," Discord growled between his teeth.

"You were eavesdropping?"

He ignored her question and turned away. "You never intended on falling in love with me, did you? This was all just a business deal to you."

"But...wasn't it a deal?"

"To me, it wasn't!"

The look he was giving her now made her shudder in terror.

"But you wouldn't expect someone like me to have feelings now, would you? *Would you ?!*"

"Discord, I never said..."

"You're right. I'm just an evil monster who's kept you prisoner!"

"You're not a monster!"

"I thought you were different! I thought you understood!"

"Discord, I *do* understand..."

"Yet you never wanted to marry me! All you ever thought about was your *friends* !" He said that word as if it were poison.

She scowled. "I had no choice! You were going to kill the princesses!"

The draconequus was taken aback. "Kill? *Kill* ?! You really thought I was going to *kill* the princesses, including one who was pregnant?!"

"But...you said...you said..."

"So I exaggerated a bit! But you actually thought I would do such a thing?"

Fluttershy's lip quivered. "I...I'm sorry..."

He turned away again. "You don't have to say it."

He felt betrayed. The one friend he had ever had, who he had thought to be different, was just like all the rest.

Fluttershy was devastated. His words stung her as her words had him. She had to make amends, but what could she do? Unlike Discord, she could not make things better with a wave of her hand, or hoof, as the case was. She did not know where to start.

"Discord, if you would just listen to me..."

"I should have known you would never care for me," he growled. "You were just stalling, weren't you? Praying that your friends would come and rescue you, weren't you? Is that why you wanted them here?"

"Discord, please! Those things I said, I didn't mean any of it!"

"So you *don't* feel like a prisoner?"

"Well, I..."

"So you *do* want to marry me tomorrow?"

"I...actually..."

"So you *didn't* just agree so you could see your friends?"

"I...I..."

"So you *do* love me?"

She hung her head in shame. "I...I do care for you, but...but..."

"You don't love me."

A tear fell down her cheek. "No."

He stepped toward the bed, his arms crossed. "No, how could you? I'm just the big bad draconequus who forced you into marriage."

"Discord, I didn't...my friends..."

"I can't believe it! After everything I've done for you, you still pick *them* over me! Well, my dear, you were right about one thing."

Fluttershy gasped as he magically lifted her into the air by the ring, bringing them face to face.

"You *have* no say in the matter. Love me or not, you *will* be mine."

For the first time in weeks, she was truly afraid of him, but she tried to be brave. "And I have no argument over that, but Discord, you have to understand that I only said those things because I panicked. I...I was afraid of what my friends would think and...I didn't know you were listening...you *shouldn't* have been listening! Still, it was no excuse for my insensitivity."

She squealed as he dropped her to the floor and turned away. Why did she not love him? Why did she still listen to those ponies? Those ponies had ruined everything! *Wait...* he thought, the gears turning in his brain. *Those ponies...*

He chuckled darkly to himself. "Oh, my poor, naïve Fluttershy." He knelt down to pick her up. "Forgive me for being so brash, my sweet. I don't blame you."

Fluttershy blinked at him in confusion. "You...you don't?"

"Oh no, you're not at fault here. You've just fallen victim to the real monsters here: those *nasty* friends of yours."

She flew out of his arms in a huff. "My friends aren't nasty!"

He chuckled again, patting her on the head. "Of course, you'd say that, naïve as you are."

"Naïve?!"

"Oh, don't take it personally, my dear. You just fail to see the truth when it's right in front of you." He ran a finger under her chin. "But don't worry, darling, we'll fix that."

Something about his tone alarmed her. Her heart was racing as his face drew closer, her head telling her to run.

"Now listen here, my dear. I've made you happy, right?"

She nodded slowly. "Yes."

"I've treated you well, have I not?"

"You have..."

"I've comforted you, gone out of my way to make you smile, and granted your every wish, yes?"

"That is correct."

"And in all of that, have I ever hurt you intentionally?"

"No, not really, but..."

"See? You know I'm not a monster."

"You're *not* a monster."

"Yes!" She shivered as he caressed her cheek. "I'm your only *real* friend here. Those ponies out there," he tilted his head toward the door, "they don't understand how happy we are...how happy we

could be."

Fluttershy was growing suspicious. "What are you...?"

She trailed off as he began stroking her mane. As usual, his tender touch shut down her senses, but something about this touch was especially mesmerizing, but all she thought about was how much she was enjoying it. Discord grinned mischievously, seeing that it was working, but he had a long way to go. He laid his free hand on her shoulder.

"I *want* you, Fluttershy," he whispered. "I want you by my side for all eternity, not just because we made a deal. I don't want just any mare. I want *you*."

She tried to say something, but all that came out was: "Huh?"

"Why don't we stop playing games, my dear? I know that deep down, this is what you want."

"I...what?"

She snapped out of her trance for a moment, but sank back into it as he ran his claw down her spine.

"Picture it, my dear. You, sitting on a glorious throne, a majestic crown on your radiant head, overlooking a world of chaos..."

"A...a..." Fluttershy shook her head. "World of chaos?!"

Oops, wrong thing to say. He quickly moved behind her, messaging her shoulders, mesmerizing her again. She was never easy to manipulate, and he hated doing this, but he had to help her see the truth. A simple touch would not be enough. He had to do the full temptation. He had to think of something to lure her in, something she would not be able to resist.

"Yes," he improvised. "The world will be at your disposal, my sweet. I can offer you the one thing you've always desired."

Her eyes opened wide. Seeing that he had gotten her attention, he turned her head so their gaze was locked.

"Love," he whispered.

Fluttershy stared into his eyes, unable to blink. "What?"

He nodded. "I *love* you."

"You...you do?"

"That's right, my dear." At that moment, his eyes transformed into hypnotic spirals. "You don't need your friends. All we need is each other. We'll be together forever, for all eternity."

"Together...forever...for all eternity," she repeated.

"Yes," he chuckled. "So what do you say, my dear? Will you be my Queen of Chaos?"

Fluttershy showed no resistance as her eyes changed to match his.

"Yes, my love," she said mechanically.

Meanwhile, every pony, aside from the Apple sisters, was sitting in the main hall, wondering what to do. Rainbow Dash was the first to break the silence.

"Fluttershy's been in there an awfully long time. Should we see if she's alright?"

"We should let her be," Twilight sighed. "Maybe we were too harsh on her."

"I suppose we *did* get a *little* carried away..." Rarity mused.

"Applejack looked pretty upset too," Spike added. "I'm going to check on her."

"I'm not sure that's a good idea," Twilight warned.

"Look, I understand why Fluttershy's upset, but Applejack just blew us off for no reason. I've never seen her like this."

"Well, okay, go ahead."

"And I'm checking on Fluttershy," Rainbow insisted.

No pony had any objection as the dragon and pegasus went in opposite directions. Rainbow was about to knock on the door when she heard voices. It didn't take long to figure out who they belonged to. *What's Discord doing in Fluttershy's room?*

She assumed the worst, but stopped herself from breaking down the door. Instead, she opened it slightly and quietly peeked inside. Her jaw dropped at what she saw. The draconequus had his arms around Fluttershy, both their eyes filled with spirals. There was no doubt what was happening.

"Now," Discord said, running his claw under her chin. "You will go out there and tell those ponies to leave this place and never come back."

Rainbow burst the door open, surprising the draconequus. "I knew it!"

"Um...this isn't what it looks like!"

"You...you...you monster!"

She charged toward him, but Discord was quick and summoned a brick wall for her to slam into.

"What's going on in there?" Twilight Sparkle called, appearing in the doorway. She gasped when she saw the blue pegasus lying unconscious under a pile of newly fallen bricks. "Rainbow! What...?"

"Twilight," Fluttershy said, still under Discord's influence. "I want you to leave this place and never come back."

The alicorn looked up in horror, seeing the spirals in her friend's eyes. She growled at the draconequus.

"What did you *do* to her?!"

"I talked some sense into her," he answered, stroking his fiancé

possessively. "I simply explained to her how you ponies have poisoned her mind with such prejudice and that she doesn't need any nasty friends like you. Isn't that right, dear?"

"Yes, my love," Fluttershy uttered.

"You fiend!" Twilight cried, stomping her hoof. "I should have known this was all a trick! You're in for it now!"

Discord laughed maniacally. "And what can you do to me, dear? You don't have the Elements of Harmony with you, and even if you did, you need all six Elements to make the spell work! And I don't think my *fiancé* is willing to turn me to stone. Are you, my dear?"

"No, my love."

"Maybe I can't turn you to stone," the alicorn grunted, "but that doesn't mean I can't show you a world of pain!"

Her horn glowed, preparing to fire. Discord simply yawned and turned her horn into a candy cane.

"Oh yes," he chuckled. " *Much* funnier than just taking it away!"

Rainbow was slowly gaining consciousness and lifting herself up. "You...you jerk...I'm gonna...I'm gonna..."

"You're gonna what? Try and hit me again?" He shook his head. "Tsk, ts, Dashie. Don't you know hitting other creatures is wrong? Some pony needs a time out!"

The blue pegasus cried out as she was thrown across the main hall and into a stool in the corner. A tall cone hat labeled 'DUNCE' appeared on her head. Rarity, Pinkie, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo gasped.

"Hey!" the pegasus filly cried out, facing the draconequus. "You can't do that to Rainbow Dash!" She threw up her hooves. "Put 'em up, ya big bully!"

"Yeah!" Sweetie Belle shouted, copying her friend's gesture.

"Oh, you wanna fight, huh?" Discord said with a twinge of amusement. "Alright. Fight!"

With a snap of his fingers, the two fillies found themselves in a wrestling ring. Scootaloo was all red with boxing gloves of the same color and Sweetie Belle was blue, also with gloves.

"Ooh!" Pinkie shrieked. "I love this game!"

She raced to the corner of the ring and pressed the giant buttons, causing Scootaloo to punch Sweetie Belle in the face.

"Hey!" the latter cried.

"Sorry! I can't control it!"

"Pinkie!" Rarity squealed in terror.

She jumped into the ring and tried to tug her sister out of the way, but she was stuck in place.

"Oh yeah!" the draconequus cheered. "Discord is back, baby!"

Twilight made a charge for him, only to have her wings turned into paper.

"Quit it!" she screamed, collapsing to the floor.

Applejack, Apple Bloom and Spike had heard the commotion and gasped as they entered the main hall.

"What in the...?" Applejack exclaimed. "Discord!"

"Why, hello there, Applejack!" the draconequus waved. "Come to join the party?"

He yelped as Apple Bloom bit his leg.

"You leave my friends alone!" she yelled through her teeth.

"Hey, get off!" he commanded, flying into the air and trying to shake her off. "Why you little..."

He then had an idea and snapped his fingers, causing Apple Bloom's cutie mark to disappear.

"Hey, I just got that!" she cried.

She realized too late that in saying that, she had let go of Discord's leg. She screamed as she fell to the ground. Fluttershy, who had been floating on the sideline, heard this scream and shook out of her trance.

"Apple Bloom?"

She gasped as she saw the filly plummeting to her doom. Applejack rushed to catch her.

"Don't worry, Apple Bloom! I gotcha!"

She didn't have to, for Fluttershy flew into a nosedive and swept the filly into her arms before she hit the marble floor.

"Fluttershy, you're back!" Twilight exclaimed.

"What happened?" the pegasus asked as she set Apple Bloom down.

Then she gazed at her surroundings, mortified. Apple Bloom was a blank flank, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo had become a giant version of Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Ponies, Rainbow was glued to a stool in the corner, and Twilight looked like a bad Nightmare Night costume. Fluttershy turned to Discord, who was shocked at seeing her awake.

"What..." she stammered. "What's going on?"

The draconequus desperately threw up his hands. "Sweetheart, I can explain..."

"You...you cast a spell on me?"

He bit his lip. "Well...maybe...a little?"

She flew up to his face. "I *trusted* you! I thought you were my friend!"

"I *am* your friend!"

"Yet you broke your promise!" She gestured toward the mess he had created. "You said you wouldn't do this anymore!"

"Technically, I didn't break any promise. I said I would confine my magic within the bounds of the property bestowed upon me. And oh, would you look at that? We're in that property right now!"

"But you cast a spell on me!" she shouted angrily. "I can't believe you tried to *trick* me into loving you!"

"Well, it didn't *work*, obviously! I mean you...how did you...? You broke my spell...without magic." He looked at her with admiration. "For some reason, that makes me even *more* attracted to you!"

He moved his claw to her face, only to have it slapped away. "Seriously? After tricking me and what you did to my friends, you still expect me to *like* you?!" She shook her head. "I was right about you all along. You *are* a monster!"

The last word pierced his heart like a sword. "Darling, please..."

She crossed her hooves and turned away from him. " *Don't* call me that!"

At that moment, something inside the draconequus snapped. He gritted his teeth at the pegasus.

"So I'm a monster, huh?" he growled. "So be it, then. But you're *still* mine!"

Fluttershy screamed as a rope rapidly snaked around her body, tying her to a chair. The chair flew into the corner opposite Rainbow Dash.

"Fluttershy!" everyone cried.

"Discord, let me go!" the yellow pegasus demanded, attempting to struggle out of the rope.

The draconequus chuckled darkly, running a finger under her chin.

"So sorry to have to do this to you, my dear, but it's as you said. You have no say in the matter."

He recoiled as a piece of wood hit him on the back of the head. It was a leg of the stool that had trapped Rainbow Dash, who was now hovering above with said stool still stuck to her rear. The leg, however, had been thrown by Applejack.

"You get away from her, ya varmint!"

Discord rolled his eyes. "Do you mind? I'm in the middle of a conversation here!"

He snapped his fingers, transforming Applejack into a giant box of actual Apple Jacks. Apple Bloom shrieked.

"That does it! Pickin' on my friends and takin' my cutie mark is one thing, but no one, I repeat, NO ONE TOUCHES MY SISTER!"

Discord only yawned and snapped his fingers again. Suddenly, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo were back to their normal selves, but tied up with Apple Bloom.

"Hey, what gives?" Scootaloo demanded.

"Oh Fluttershy," the draconequus said in a singsong voice. "How do three kids sound to you?"

"You're crazy!" Apple Bloom shouted.

"Oh shut up."

He zipped all their mouths closed.

"You beast!" Rarity cried, charging towards him.

With another snap of his fingers, the unicorn's hair turned green. He made a mirror appear in front of her so she could see.

"Ah!" she screamed. "Not again!"

"Hey!" Pinkie cried, finally pulling away from the Rock 'Em Sock 'Em

game. "Leave her alone!"

In a flash, Pinkie got a new hairdo as well, her cotton candy-colored hair now actual cotton candy. She yelped at first, but then chewed on a piece.

"Mmm," she said.

"Pinkie, stop eating your hair and help me take this punk down!" Rainbow commanded, darting her eyes at Discord. "I ought to press you into jerk cider!"

Another snap of the fingers caused cider to dump onto her head. Then with a laugh, Discord stuffed her into a cider mug.

"Discord, stop it!" Fluttershy pleaded. "Why are you doing this?"

"Isn't it obvious, my dear?" he smirked, lowering his head toward her. "I'm teaching these ponies a lesson on what happens when they mess with the Lord of Chaos!"

He reached out his claw and caressed her face, only to have her jerk her head away.

"What do you want from me?" she demanded, her eyes tearing up.

"You," he whispered lowly. "I want you to be my Queen of Chaos."

"No! Never!"

"Have it your way, then."

He gathered the remaining ponies and Spike into the wrestling ring, steel walls rising high above them. Discord teleported himself and Fluttershy over the group as the walls started closing in on them. Rainbow Dash was still stuck in the mug and Twilight's wings were still paper, making it impossible for them to escape. Fluttershy could not take it anymore.

"No, please! Stop! Don't hurt them! I'll..." she hung her head. "I'll do anything."

Discord cupped his ear. "What was that? Didn't hear you over the screaming ponies."

"I'll do anything!" she shouted.

He gave her a sly grin. " *Anything* ?"

She breathed. "It's me you want! Leave them out of it!"

"No, Fluttershy!" Twilight called. "Don't do it!"

"It's the only way, Twilight!" She turned back to the draconequus. "I'll marry you. I'll be your wife, your queen, and I will never resist you again. I will do whatever you want, and I won't fight against it. Everything will be exactly the way you want, if you would just spare them, please! Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye."

"No!" Pinkie cried. "Not the Pinkie Promise!"

"Please! Just leave them alone!"

Discord stared at her, searching for any sign of trickery, but found none. He chuckled throatily.

"That's better."

He snapped his fingers, stopping the walls from moving and undoing the rope.

"Although," he said, stroking his beard. "I need some sort of proof that you will hold to your word."

"How am I...?" Fluttershy started to say, but he stopped her as he lifted her chin.

"How about another kiss?"

" *Another* kiss?!" Rainbow exclaimed.

The yellow pegasus was frozen in place and would have fallen had Discord not wrapped his arms around her.

"I...in front of...?"

"Ah-ah-ah," he waggled his finger at her. "You said you wouldn't resist."

Defeated, she closed her eyes as he leaned towards her. Down below, the ponies were trying to free Rainbow Dash, Twilight and Rarity pulling on the mug, Pinkie pulling on the pegasus' head. Just as Discord's lips were inches away from Fluttershy's, the mug came off with a pop, causing Rainbow to land on Pinkie. She quickly recovered and darted upward.

"Don't you dare touch her!" she shouted.

Discord moved away from his prize and narrowed his eyes at Rainbow. "You know, I've had just about enough of you meddlesome ponies!"

He raised his glowing claw, ready to strike. Fluttershy gasped.

"Rainbow, Discord, don't!"

But neither of them stopped what they were doing. Promise or no promise, she could not let her friend get hurt. Without a second thought, she pushed Rainbow out of the way of Discord's blow. Fluttershy cried out as she was thrown across the room and smashed against the wall. Discord gasped when he saw who he had struck.

"Oh no, no, no, no, *no* !" he muttered.

He rushed to his beloved as she slid to the floor.

"Fluttershy, are you...?"

He trailed off when he heard a sob. *Oh darn. Please*, no! He knelt down to her.

"Please don't cry, please! Fluttershy, I didn't...I didn't mean..."

She moved her hooves away from her face, revealing her big, tear filled eyes. The look she gave him, this look filled with so much fear

and horror, killed him.

"Fluttershy, don't look at me that way..."

He reached his paw towards her. She flinched and hid her face again, curling into a shivering ball, but the look she had given him still lingered. He gazed down at her and then at his hands.

"What have I done?" he said under his breath.

His anger had driven him so far that he had hurt the only thing he had ever loved, after swearing otherwise. He knew from that look that what he had done was unforgivable. She would never love him now. Even if she did marry him, she would never look at him the same way, nor smile for him ever again and would be miserable for the rest of her days.

He looked at his beloved Fluttershy as she burst into tears. He wanted her more than anything in the world, but not like this.

Discord turned away from her and hung his head. A light emitted from his chest, restoring the ponies to their normal selves and releasing them from their prisons. The three fillies rushed to embrace their sisters. Fluttershy looked up from her hooves, surprised and confused. The draconequus walked sadly to the farthest corner of the room and sat down.

"Get out," he grunted.

The ponies did not argue and raced out the door. Fluttershy rose and cautiously approached Discord.

"That includes you."

She stopped in her tracks. "What?"

She looked down as the chain and ring vanished from around her neck.

"I release you," he said without turning around. "You're no longer bound to me."

Fluttershy was more confused than ever. "You're...you're letting me go?"

"Yes! Now go! Before I change my mind."

"But...Discord, I..."

"Are you deaf?!" he bellowed, whirling his head around angrily. "I said *go* !"

She squeaked and ran to the door, seeing Applejack waiting for her. In the blast, the castle had returned to the ground and the force field had diminished, making it easy for them all to leave. Before she crossed the bridge, she remembered her animals and went back for them. She told them she would explain everything later, but they had to leave now. Once they were on the other side of the gorge, Fluttershy looked back at the castle. Her head told her to run as far away from the place as possible, but her heart compelled her to stay.

"Fluttershy, come on!" Twilight shouted from ahead.

"I'm coming!" Fluttershy called back.

She glanced at the castle one last time and then went after her friends. She did not see the draconequus in the tower window.

Discord watched her go until she was out of sight. He buried his face in his hands. The zebra's words made sense now. He could not keep her locked in this castle forever. He loved her too much. That's why he had let her go.

He was a fool to believe that she could ever be happy with him, for who could ever love a monster?

It's not over yet, but you know in all *Beauty and the Beast* versions, something happens resulting in the beast letting her go. I suppose it could have been less dramatic, but...

straps helmet and armor on

Okay, hit me with your best shot.

The Emptiness

I realized it's been over a week since I updated, but I had to decide how I was going to end this. Plus, it's hard to write when you're tied to a chair (thanks, Kia). Don't know why you were so surprised! It IS a drama after all. Oh, and...I GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL!

Fluttershy had not left her cottage for three days. After returning home, the first thing she did was collapse on her bed and in the morning went shopping for food. Since then, she had not moved. Her friends would swing by, trying to cheer her up and convince her to go out, but none of them succeeded. Pinkie Pie even threw a welcome home party, but that only brought her to tears.

Finally, she emerged from her cottage, but only went as far as her yard. It was mostly empty, since she had let most of her critters go, and the flowers were almost dead from lack of water.

As she watered them, she did not notice she was being watched.

Her cottage was on the very edge of the Everfree Forest and she made an effort not to look at it. Perched on one of the trees was the very draconequus she was trying to forget.

He had done nothing but watch her the past few days, when he was not sulking. It had all been through the mirror until now. It ached to see her, and up close was even worse. Why did he torture himself then? He could not stay away from her.

He wished he could do more than just worship her from afar. He wanted to take her in his arms and apologize for everything and tell her how much he loved her. Then he would hold her close to his heart with no intention of ever letting go.

But he had already done enough.

"Fluttershy!"

At the sound of Twilight Sparkle's voice, Discord vanished from his hiding place. The alicorn approached her pegasus friend, carrying a bag of books.

"Nice to see that you're out and about," she said with a smile. "I brought some books that might cheer you up."

"Thanks," Fluttershy muttered. "But I don't think reading's going to make me feel better."

"Well, you have to do something. Maybe what you need is a break, to get your mind off..." She did not dare say it. "Anyway, I'm returning to Canterlot tomorrow. You want to come along?"

She did not take time to think about it and nodded.

The next day, Twilight, Fluttershy and their four friends were on a train to Canterlot. The others had decided to come as well for Fluttershy's sake, though it took a while for Rainbow Dash to convince Spitfire into letting her have a vacation. Since she had started going out with Soarin, Spitfire had been a little edgy with her. Spike had to stay in Ponyville and mind the library. Each mare tried to engage Fluttershy into a conversation, but she hardly spoke a word.

"And then he said: I'm just a little horse!" Rainbow burst out laughing.

"I don't get it," Pinkie said.

"Well, if you heard Soarin tell it, you'd think it was funny."

Rarity rolled eyes. "I've heard of love being blind, but deaf?"

"I'm not in love with Soarin! We haven't even been going out that long!"

Fluttershy let out a whimper that only Applejack had heard, because she was in the bunk next to her. She patted the yellow pegasus on the back.

"Hang on, Sugar," she murmured. "We're almost there."

Celestia greeted the group at the castle and surprised Fluttershy with a hug.

"I never had a chance to thank you," the princess explained. "What you did was very brave."

She did not need to ask what she was referring to.

Fluttershy remained in her room until dinner, though she could barely eat. As she fiddled with her fork, she thought of her many mealtimes with Discord. He would always give her what she asked, or surprise her with her favorites. She remembered one time when he made the candles dance and the gravy boat come to life. Those little harmless magic tricks would make her giggle. Somehow, he always managed to put a smile on her face.

Her lack of appetite did not go unnoticed.

"Are you alright, my dear?" Celestia inquired.

Fluttershy winced, as she was used to hearing that question from someone else. "I'm just not hungry, that's all."

"Maybe you should get some rest," Applejack suggested, noting the dark circles under her eyes.

All she did was nod as she excused herself from the table.

"She's been like this ever since she came back," Twilight explained to the princesses.

"I do not believe you have fully explained how she managed to return," Luna said.

"Well...he let her go."

The Princess of the Night widened her eyes. "Pardon?"

"That's what happened. He just let her go."

"But...why?"

Twilight shrugged. "She won't talk about what happened and we're afraid to ask."

Applejack slammed down her fork. "Y'all still don't get it, do ya?"

The southern pony then stomped out of the room.

Two hours later, Fluttershy lay wide awake in bed, staring at the ceiling. Although she was tired to the bone, she could not sleep. She had gotten used to Discord coming in to say goodnight and then playing her lullaby for her. About a week ago, he had surprised her with a kiss on the forehead.

Her mind then wandered to their last night together, when he had kissed her for real. His lips had felt so cool and gentle against hers. She would never admit this aloud, but that had been the best moment of her life.

Despite what he had tried to do to her, she wanted him here. She wanted to feel his arms around her, to be secure in his embrace. She wanted to hear his voice whispering in her ear, comforting her.

She missed him.

Discord was not getting any sleep either. He tossed and turned on the ceiling all night, but he could not rest. He was thinking of Fluttershy, betting that she was sleeping much more peacefully now that she no longer had him to fear. It took all his cognitive power not to check in on her. He had tried to distance himself for the past few days, but the longing to see her, to hold her in his arms, still lingered.

He jumped out of bed and flew slowly to Fluttershy's room. He had not touched it since she had left. He considered turning it into a bowling alley, or a swimming pool, anything to erase any trace of her ever being there. But how could he?

He approached the bed where she had once slept. He could see her lying there on her side, her chest rising up and down ever so slightly. He reached out to touch her, only to realize it was a mirage.

He took the sheets in his hands and pressed them to his face, inhaling her sweet flowery scent. At that moment, he broke into tears.

"I'm so sorry, Fluttershy. I'm *so* sorry."

The next thing Fluttershy knew, she was standing in the garden Discord had given her. She did not remember how she had gotten there, but she immediately began searching the draconequus out.

"Discord!" she called. "Discord, are you here?"

She heard a moan in the distance. She ran towards the sound, but it seemed further away with every step she took. Then she saw a broken figure lying on its side. As she got closer, she gasped.

"Discord? What's happened to you?"

The weak draconequus rolled over and smiled at the sight of her.

"Ah, Fluttershy. Now that I've seen you again, I can die peacefully."

"W-what? No! You can't die! You're immortal!"

"Everything must die eventually, my dear."

"But how? I don't understand!"

He reached out and touched her face. "Trust me. It's better this way."

"No! It can't end like this! Discord!"

She continued calling his name as he faded into nothing. Suddenly, another familiar figure appeared in front of her. She looked up to meet the eyes of Princess Luna.

"Do not fret, child," she spoke softly. "Discord is still alive."

"Princess Luna! But I saw him... Wait. Am I dreaming?"

"Indeed you are."

"Oh, thank goodness, I thought..."

"What are you doing here, child?"

Fluttershy blinked. "What do you mean?"

"Let me rephrase that. Why are you here and not with Discord?"

"Beg pardon, your highness, but did you not hear? He let me go."

"But why *did* you go?"

"Because...well, he didn't want me and..."

Luna scoffed. "Didn't want you? I beg to differ. I saw you two in the forest."

Fluttershy froze. "You...you saw me kiss him?!"

"No, I saw you dancing...he kissed you?"

The pegasus shrunk in embarrassment. "...just once..."

"My point is that in all the years that I have known Discord, I have never seen him look at any pony the way he looked at you. It is clear that he cares for you and that you were happy. So what happened?"

"Um...I said some things I didn't mean and...he got mad and... well..." She could not go on.

"Hmm," Luna pondered. "It seems to me like he was simply hurt, but only because of his affections for you."

"How can you be sure that's what it was?"

"Why else would he let you go?"

Fluttershy was about to answer when the image rippled, indicating that she was waking up.

"Listen to your heart, child!" Luna called as she flew out of the dream.

She sat up in bed and sighed. "Oh, what am I going to do?"

Discord was in the garden, sitting by the pond, staring at his reflection.

"What are you sulking about?" his image inquired. "You don't need that pony. You got along fine without her before."

"I did not know her before," Discord grumbled.

"Doesn't matter! You're better off!"

"Then why do I feel so empty?"

"Because you gave up your control of Equestria! A very stupid thing to do, by the way! Hey, maybe the ponies are so in shock that they're vulnerable enough for attack!"

He sighed. "What's the point? None of it matters."

His reflection was confused. "None of it matters? You're the Lord of Chaos, for crying out loud! You have powers beyond comprehension! You're saying none of that matters?"

"None of it." He conjured a rose to sniff. "Not since...her."

The image rolled its eyes. "Well, fine! If you want the girl so bad, why did you let her go in the first place?"

"Because..." he gazed up at the starry sky. "I love her."

"So steal her back! I don't care! Just quit your moping!"

"I can't do that. Did you see the way she looked at me? She'll never see me as anything...but a monster."

He splashed the water, causing his reflection to ripple. He then buried his face in his hands and sobbed.

When Fluttershy came down to the kitchen, she found Applejack preparing a plate of sandwiches.

"Well, ain't this déjà vu?" the cowgirl said once she noticed her friend. "I'm guessin' you're down here for the same reason."

"Huh?" Fluttershy questioned, tilting her head.

"Last time we were down here, ya had a dream about Discord."

"Well, uh...yes. But why are you here?"

"Couldn't sleep," Applejack said, handing her a sandwich. "I've been worryin' about ya, Sugar Cube. Ya don't eat, ya don't sleep, ya hardly speak..."

"I'm just recovering from...well, you know. That's all."

"I think it's a little more than that."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll explain later. First, tell me about yerr dream."

She told Applejack every last detail, including the part where Luna had appeared. Applejack nodded as she listened.

"So this garden...I saw it while we were at the castle. Ya sayin' Discord made that for you?"

"Yes," Fluttershy muttered, fiddling with her still uneaten sandwich.

"Huh. That would explain where yerr critters went off to. And you told the princess that you and Discord...kissed?" She hung her head. "I'm not tryin' to pressure ya, Sugar. You were with him for a whole month. I just wanna know what happened. I promise I won't bring up any of it with the others."

She sighed. "I was terrified at first. I explained to him I wanted to fall in love before I got married, just to stall for time. Then he started asking me if I loved him. Well, then we sort of...got to know one another and...he became so kind and gentle and respected my space. Whenever I saw him, I could not help but smile. I...I miss him. I know I really shouldn't, after the party...oh, he was so upset..."

"I think that was mostly our fault, hon. I'm the one who put you on the spot and asked you if you loved him. I'm real sorry for that. It's just...you know you have all the symptoms? Even now? Blushin', lack of appetite and sleep..."

"Maybe it's not what you think!" Fluttershy snapped.

"Maybe it's *exactly* what I think!"

"How do you know?"

"Because that's how I felt after the Timberwolf incident!"

They both grew silent. Then Fluttershy dropped her sandwich and looked away.

"I don't know, Applejack! I miss him, but I don't know if I..."

Applejack laid a hoof on her shoulder. "Hey, I was in denial too. It took me a while before I realized my feelings."

"What do you expect me to do? Go back to him?"

"I expect you to follow Princess Luna's advice and do what your heart tells ya."

"You saw what happened! What if he becomes possessive over me again? What if I'm wrong? What if our friendship was all a trick? What if this was just some game to him?"

"Ya know what they say, Sugar Cube. If you love somethin', set 'em free."

Fluttershy lifted her head in realization. "But he *did* set me free." She

spun to face her friend. "Oh Applejack, can't you see he loves me? He didn't want me unhappy, so he let me go! Oh, he must be so lonely right now! What if my dream comes true? Oh, Applejack, I have to see him! I need to make this right!"

"Look, I said listen to yerr heart, but if you do decide to go back, don't just do it for Discord. Do it for yourself. Love is just as selfish as it is selfless. Are you going back because he wants you or you want him?"

"Both! Oh, I can't deny it anymore! I love him! Despite it all, I love him! You hear me? I love him!"

She heard a gasp behind her and Fluttershy turned to see Pinkie, Twilight, Rainbow Dash and Rarity standing in the doorway, their mouths dropped open.

"H-how long have you been standing there?" Fluttershy stammered.

Neither of them said anything for a while, until Pinkie suddenly burst into excitement.

"Oh my gosh, oh my gosh! Fluttershy's in love! And he loves you too! That is so romantic! You know what this calls for?"

"NO!" every pony cried in unison.

"You mean you're not mad?" Fluttershy asked in wonder.

"Sweetie, we don't know what to think," Rarity explained. "We saw you've been miserable for the past few days. Now we know why. What we don't understand is how? How could you have fallen in love with that mon...draconequus?"

She faced her friends defiantly. "I know it's hard for you to understand, I find it hard to understand as well, and I don't expect you to ever understand, but Discord is not as evil as you think. He might have been before, but he's changed."

"Even if you're right," Rainbow said slowly, "how do you know he really cares for you?"

"He let me go."

"What if he just felt guilty or something? Not to be judgmental or anything, but it's a possibility."

"We just don't want you to get hurt," Rarity added.

"I don't need your approval," Fluttershy declared. "I am going back to Discord, whether you like it or not."

"We *don't* like it," Twilight confirmed. "We cannot stand to see you in the clutches of a monster. But...if he really has changed like you said..."

"He has! Believe me!"

"But we cannot let you go out in the Everfree Forest alone and into the home of an unpredictable draconequus!"

Fluttershy hung her head again.

"Which is why we're coming with you."

Her ears perked up. "You are?"

"We are?" Rainbow asked. She cried out as Applejack poked her in the ribs. "Ow!"

"You bet your sweet shoes we are!" the cowgirl exclaimed.

"Ooh, this is gonna be fun!" Pinkie said, jumping for joy.

Rainbow Dash sighed. "Oh, what the heck? *Some* pony's gotta protect you!"

"We may not understand your feelings for Discord," Twilight explained, "but who are we to stand in the way of you doing what you think is right?"

Fluttershy smiled at her friends. "Thanks, girls."

"Hold on!" Rarity commanded. "You're about to make a declaration of true love! You need to look stunning!"

Oh shoot, I did it again, didn't I? Well, I'm just going to have to roll with it. MWAHAHAHAHA!

The Confession

Oh boy! I'm really stoked about this chapter! I'm going to stop typing now so not to give anything away!

"No offense, Rarity," Fluttershy whispered. "This is a nice outfit and all, but it's not really appropriate for walking through the forest."

Rarity had dressed her in a long, flowing green gown and had curled her hair. The six of them were trudging through the Everfree Forest, Twilight lighting the way with her horn.

"So have you thought about what you are going to say?" Rarity asked Fluttershy, ignoring her comment.

"What do you mean?"

"Um, *hello* ? You're about to confess to the one you love that...well, that you love him! You have to do this by the book!"

"I was just going to apologize for everything I said first and then tell him."

"You sure it was wise not to wait until morning?" Applejack inquired. "This forest is even more dangerous after dark."

"The longer we wait, the lonelier he gets! I have to tell him now before something bad happens."

"Ooh, ooh!" Pinkie cried, bouncing up and down. "After you tell him, can we celebrate with a I-Found-My-True-Love Party?!"

Rainbow Dash rolled her eyes. "AJ's right. It's not safe out here. Who knows what could be lurking in those trees?"

"I don't care!" Fluttershy declared. "I need to see him! I will do whatever it takes!"

"Wow," Twilight marveled. "You've really changed, Fluttershy."

"How so?"

"For one thing, you're much braver. You haven't shuddered or squealed once since we entered the forest."

The pegasus pondered on this and realized that her friend was right. She had not even thought of the dangers in the woods until Applejack and Rainbow had brought them up. She concluded that after spending a month with Discord, who had been the object of her nightmares for a long time, she was not so afraid of other creatures anymore.

"By the way, Applejack," said Rarity, "at dinner, you said we 'didn't get it.' Did you know Fluttershy was in love?" The cowgirl nodded. "How?"

"It was pretty obvious. She showed all the signs."

"Maybe, but...at the party...you said I knew nothing about romance..."

"Sorry, I just got upset, is all."

"But...you *do* ?"

Applejack blushed. "I, uh..." She halted suddenly. "Y'all hear that?"

"Really, Applejack, if you don't want to answer the question..."

"Shhh. Listen!"

Every pony stopped in their tracks and silenced. They heard a low growl behind them and then the snap of a twig. They spun around and saw a pair of yellow eyes glowing in the darkness of the trees. Applejack took a sniff of the air and gasped.

"Run," she muttered.

No pony thought twice. As soon as they took off, a pack of Timberwolves leapt out of the trees and pursued the group.

"Why is it always Timberwolves?!" Twilight shouted.

Applejack abruptly stopped. "Y'all go on ahead. I'll lead 'em off."

"You mean *we*'ll lead 'em off!" Rainbow exclaimed, flying down to her side. "I'm not leaving you hanging."

The cowgirl grinned. "On my signal, you go right and I go left." She waved her hooves at the approaching pack. "Hey, ya big goons! Over here!"

"Yeah, you ain't so tough!" Rainbow taunted, blowing a raspberry at them.

The wooden beasts roared in anger and sped up.

"Now," Applejack muttered.

The two darted in opposite directions. A few followed after each of them, but three did not abandon their pursuit of the others. Rarity was the first to notice.

"How many of those things are there?!"

"I mean why couldn't it have been a manticore or an Ursa Minor?" Twilight raved. "At least those don't come in numbers!"

"Not to mention Fluttershy knows how to defeat a manticore," Pinkie pointed out. "Plus a dragon, a bear, Cerberus, a cockatrice..."

"That's it! Fluttershy, have you ever tamed a Timberwolf?"

"You're kidding, right?!" the pegasus squeaked, the fear returning to her. "I doubt they're angry because they have thorns in their paws! They're *made* of thorns!"

"Twilight, can't you teleport us out of here?" Rarity demanded.

The alicorn stopped for a moment and gulped. "I'll try, but it takes a lot of work, plus AJ and Rainbow..."

"We'll come back for them, but we need to save ourselves first!"

Twilight closed her eyes and concentrated. Her horn illuminated with light, but it dimmed when she saw that the Timberwolves were only a few feet away.

"No time! Run for it!"

Meanwhile, Applejack was attempting to shake off her third of the pack. She snapped a branch, shattering one of them and then got rid of another by ducking as it pounced. It fell apart as it hit the ground. The last wolf was still after her. Then she saw a pond of quicksand ahead. Thinking fast, she grabbed a vine in her mouth and swung to the other side. The Timberwolf noticed the sand too late and sank like a rock.

It did not take long for Rainbow to outrun, in her case out-*fly*, the wolves, as she was the fastest pegasus in all of Equestria. However, she was too busy taunting them that she did not pay attention to where she was going. She crashed into the side of a mountain, causing rocks to come tumbling down on herself and the Timberwolves. When she finally crawled out from the rubble, her wing was broken.

"Darn it!"

The last three Timberwolves were gaining on the four ponies.

"Hey, I can fly!" Twilight exclaimed, taking to the skies.

"But we can't!" Rarity complained.

The alicorn did not get high enough. One of the wolves jumped up and snapped at her wing. Twilight cried out as she plummeted to the ground. Pinkie broke her fall, but it made them both sitting ducks. Rarity and Fluttershy bolted in opposite directions.

The latter reached a dead end. She turned around to face the beast closing in on her. She was so terrified she could not open her wings, or use her Stare. She was frozen in place.

Discord was in the garden, plucking petals off a daisy.

"She loves me not...still not loving me...and she still doesn't love me...she loves me not in a million years! Oh, and she loves me not, big surprise!"

His ears perked up as he heard a familiar high-pitched scream.
"Fluttershy?"

He thought he was imagining things when he heard it again: "Help!"

It is common knowledge that for most creatures, when one's mate is threatened, they will go into full protective mode. That is exactly what happened to Discord as he dropped the flower and gritted his teeth in fury.

Fluttershy closed her eyes, waiting for the animal's jaws to sink into her skin. Suddenly, she heard a second growl and opened her eyes to see Discord down on all fours in front of her.

"Don't you *dare* touch her!"

The Timberwolf was surprised, but did not let his guard down and roared at the draconequus. He hissed in return.

"Hey, ugly! Why don't you go pick on someone your own size? Like a Chihuahua!"

He snapped his fingers, reducing the Timberwolf to the size of a puppy. The same happened to the other two as they were about to pounce on the ponies. They ran into the forest, yipping in panic. Fluttershy looked up at the draconequus in awe as he turned to her.

"What are you doing out here in the middle of the night?!" he demanded. "Do you have any idea what would have happened if I hadn't...?"

"You...saved me," she uttered.

"Well, of course I did! You think I would be able to live with myself if anything happened to...?"

He was cut off as the pegasus flung her arms around his neck and burst into tears. He stared down at her in confusion.

"Fluttershy!" cried Applejack's voice. "Are you all...?"

She paused when she saw the draconequus. Rarity appeared behind her and gawked. Discord rolled his eyes.

"I know, I know. I shouldn't be here and blah, blah, blah, and..."

"You just saved our lives," Rarity marveled.

"Pardon?" Applejack uttered.

Rainbow Dash came panting out of the bushes. "I ran as fast as I could. My wing was broken and..." She stopped at the sight of Fluttershy embracing Discord. "What are you doing out here?"

"He saved our lives!" Rarity declared.

"Say what now?"

"It's true! He shrank the Timberwolves to the size of Chihuahuas!"

"Well, I'll be darn," Applejack muttered in wonder.

"Hey, where are Twilight and Pinkie?" Rainbow Dash asked, looking frantically in all directions.

"They're injured!" exclaimed Rarity. "One of the Timberwolves snapped at Twilight's wing and she fell on top of Pinkie! They can't get up!"

Fluttershy pulled away from Discord as she heard this. "Oh, that's terrible! Discord, could you...?"

"Anything for you," the draconequus said, snapping his fingers.

She was surprised that he did not roll his eyes or complain or anything.

Next thing they knew, they were in Fluttershy's old room at the castle. Twilight, Pinkie and Rainbow Dash found themselves

sprawled on the bed, which had been made wider for their convenience.

"What the...?" Twilight muttered in confusion. "Discord?"

"No time to explain," Fluttershy said before turning to the draconequus. "Can you fix them?"

"One second," Discord said, making a doctor's uniform appear on his body. "Now, let's see what the damage is, shall we?"

He summoned an x-ray machine and examined the bones of the three ponies.

"Uh huh," he muttered, stroking his beard. "Well, Rainbow *Crash* and Twilight *Floppe* each have a broken wing, Twilight has a sprained hoof and Pinkie has two broken ribs..."

Pinkie laughed. "Ha-ha! Twilight Flopple! Ouch!"

"Don't laugh. It will only increase the pain." He pushed the x-ray away. "Now hold still. This won't hurt a bit."

He snapped his fingers and the three sat up. Rainbow lightly nudged her wing.

"Hey, you fixed it!"

"Amazing," Twilight marveled. "I can't even do healing spells!"

"Can I laugh now?" Pinkie asked. She did not wait for an answer and chortled. "Yeah, I think I'm good."

Rainbow Dash could not believe it. "What else can I say but... thanks!"

"You're welcome," Discord said with a grin. "Now that that's all settled," he turned to Fluttershy, "explain to me what you were *doing* out there! You could have been *killed*! Why, if I hadn't heard you..."

Fluttershy quickly replied. "I came to see you."

He blinked. "W-what?"

She looked at her friends as she took Discord by the paw. "There's, um...something I need to tell you."

As soon as they were out of the room, the five rushed to the door. Pinkie won in the battle for the keyhole.

"You came back?" Discord uttered in disbelief. "To see...me?" Fluttershy nodded. "Why?"

"I...I wanted to apologize..."

"Apologize? You? My dear, if anyone should be apologizing, it's me! I nearly forced you into doing something you didn't want to do and... and I *hurt* you! Not to mention I've treated you like...how did you put it? Right, a 'caged bird!' There's nothing you need to apologize for."

"Oh, but there is. I said some awful things the other day, things I didn't mean. How could I say those things after all you did for me? I'm the monster, not you."

He huffed. "Yeah, right. Fluttershy, take a look at yourself and then at me. I think it's obvious who the monster is here. You should quit wasting your time with me and go home. No need to pity me."

"I *do* pity you, but that's not the reason I came. You see...I miss you."

He stared at her for a long time, still not believing this. "You miss being my prisoner?"

"I miss being your *friend*. Although...I take it you want it to be more than that..." She suddenly grew very nervous. "B-but...before I go on...I must, um, ask you something."

"Yes?"

She looked him directly in the eye. "Did you ever really love me?"

He choked up. "I...I..."

"You kept asking me if I loved you. I want to know whether it was because you wanted me to love you back, or was it all a game. Was I just some trophy to you?"

"No, Fluttershy! You're more than that!"

"Well, did you?"

He turned his back to her, his brow sweating and his teeth grinding together. He pulled at his mane, trying to find the words.

"I...I...yes." He sighed. "I will admit. In the beginning, it was a game. I didn't expect you to come, but when you did...I came up with a scheme. I was going to make you fall in love with me so you would not use your Element against me. I only thought of you as an incentive. Although...you were right. I was lonely. That's the reason I asked for a bride.

"I spent many years watching the happy couples walk off into the sunset. It made me gag, seeing them making kissy faces and holding hooves...but I was only disgusted because I could never have what they had. I was tired of being alone. I denied this, even to myself, and invented that scheme as an excuse for acting all gaga over you.

"But then...you started treating me differently, and I became so enthralled with you that I forgot the scheme entirely. I kept telling myself that it was just a slight attraction, but...the more time I spent with you, the better I felt. Sounds cheesy, I know."

He summoned a cheese plate for emphasis. "Want some?"

Fluttershy took a slice of cheddar as he continued.

"Whenever I was with you, I felt...well, wonderful. Soon I realized that I was not trying to please you because I wanted a queen, but I wanted to see you happy. I...cared about you. A lot."

He chuckled. "Funny how love is quite similar to chaos. It drives you to do the craziest of things. The problem was I cared about you so much that I wanted you all to myself. That's why I did not let you visit your friends. I was afraid of losing you. Even if you would never love

me, I wanted you with me always.

"You can guess how upset I was when I heard you say that you did not love me. I...I lost control. I toyed with your emotions in the end, tricked you into loving me. I just didn't want to lose you."

Discord then faced her.

"I didn't want to lose you," he repeated.

"But did you...?" Fluttershy started to ask again.

He hung his head. "Not everything I said whilst corrupting you was a lie. I...I did love you." He looked up at her again. "I still do." He got down on his knees. "Oh, Fluttershy, I love you more than chaos itself! You're the best thing that's ever happened to me. You're precious to me, and I would rather die a thousand deaths than to see you miserable. So when I realized how much pain I had caused you, I had to release you."

Fluttershy was on the verge of tears. "Discord..."

"Let me finish! I *had* to let you go. I can only bring misery to ponies, misery to *you*. I also know that even if you did marry me, you could never, *ever* love me. No matter what you think, no matter what you hope, I'm still a monster."

They locked gaze for a long while.

"Are you done?"

He looked away. "Yes."

She approached him and laid a sympathetic hoof on his shoulder. "Discord, don't you see? I'm miserable *without* you."

He turned to her skeptically. "You are?"

She nodded. "Why do you think I came back?"

"Out of pity?" he guessed.

She shook her head. "Now it's my turn. I thought you were a monster. I was more terrified of you than anything else, but that was before I got to know you. You may have done some horrible things, but we all make mistakes. Sure, sometimes I felt like a possession, but you were also kind and giving. You did your best to help me forget my imprisonment...and how you looked.

"I will admit...it became harder for me to answer your question each night. I thought I might have feelings for you, but I was scared. See, I wasn't ready for marriage. I'm still not. But it hurt me to see you so disappointed.

"Like I said before, I miss you. I miss seeing you every morning, I miss hearing your voice and feeling your touch. And you've proved to me that you're not all bad, especially after saving me and my friends. Now that I've met you, I...I can't imagine a life without you. What I'm trying to say is..."

She glanced away, her cheeks turning red. Discord's eyes widened in astonishment. Could this be it? Could this be the moment he had been waiting for? Then she looked into his eyes and gave a shy smile.

"I love you."

He said nothing for a while. Fluttershy rubbed her foreleg awkwardly.

"It's true. It's taken me a long time to realize it, but I love you."

Discord did not waste a moment. He grabbed the pony by the shoulders and fiercely, but tenderly, pressed his lips against hers. Fluttershy was shocked for a second, but then closed her eyes and returned the kiss as they both released all the passion they had been holding back for so long.

On the other side of the bedroom door, Pinkie gasped dramatically.

"They're kissing, they're kissing!"

"Gross," Rainbow muttered.

"Guess we'll have to get used to that," Rarity grumbled.

Fluttershy had never felt so happy. As Discord ran his fingers through her hair, she could have sworn she heard fireworks. She then broke the kiss and looked up to see stars exploding above them.

"What...?" she started to say.

"Magical reaction," Discord explained quickly. "Don't ruin the moment."

He returned his lips to hers and bent over, caressing her small body. After a while, he pulled away again.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" he asked, moving a strand of hair away from her eye. "I'm not exactly Prince Charming, you know?"

Fluttershy nodded. "I'm sure. I don't care."

He grinned. "You must marry me then! You must be with me always! You must never leave my... Oh, there I go again." He spoke in a gentler tone. "Would you marry me? I promise you can visit your friends whenever you like."

She smiled warmly and gently kissed his snout. "I appreciate it, but I told you. I'm not ready for marriage now."

"But...I love you and you love me. What are you waiting for?"

"I want you to make up with the ponies, *all* of them. That includes the princesses. Show them that you'll use your magic for good instead of evil. I want my friends to see that you make me happy."

"I thought you didn't care what they thought."

"I don't, but if they learn to appreciate you, then we can all be happy. I want things to be settled between you and Equestria before we take any big steps."

Discord sighed. "Well, if that's what you want, I just have one thing

to ask you." The rest he said under his breath. "I can't believe I'm doing this."

"What's happening?" Rainbow Dash asked, trying to get a view through the keyhole.

Pinkie gasped. "He's kneeling down!"

"What?" Applejack uttered. "Already?"

"Hush," Twilight whispered, opening the door a crack so they could listen.

"Fluttershy," Discord said admiringly. "Will you...?"

"Oh my stars," Rarity muttered. "He's actually doing it! I'm going to have to make a wedding dress!"

"Shhh!" Twilight said again.

"...be my special some pony?"

"Oh, come on!" Pinkie Pie swung open the door, startling the couple. "You meanie! We thought you were proposing! I was going to throw an engagement party! I had already planned on the decorations, the cake, the number of guests..."

"Ahem," Discord cleared his throat. "Do you *mind*?"

Pinkie giggled awkwardly. "Oops, sorry."

The draconequus turned back to his beloved. "Well?"

Fluttershy grinned. "What do *you* think?"

He cried out for joy as he took her into his arms.

"We'll just, um, leave you two alone then," Applejack said, heading for the exit.

"Yeah," Rainbow cringed. "We'll just...wait. Are we *really* leaving them *alone* ?!"

She yelped as the cowgirl grabbed her by the tail. "Come on, Rainbow."

The pegasus rolled her eyes. "Oh, fine! You better take care of her, you hear? Cuz if you don't..." She waved her fist at the draconequus before following Applejack.

"You do realize I'll have to inform Celestia and Luna about this?" Twilight said as she passed the couple.

Discord waved her off. "Yeah, yeah. Just make sure they know that I didn't put her under a spell. Hold on. You're really okay with this?"

"Well...not really. We just want our friend to be happy. Though Rainbow is right. If you don't keep your word, you'll have to answer to us."

"Yeah, whatever."

"*And* when you do get married," Pinkie chimed, "be sure to invite us to the wedding!"

"And let me make the dresses!" Rarity exclaimed.

"By the way," Twilight said, pausing at the doorway, "thank you for saving our lives. We owe you a debt of gratitude."

Once the ponies were gone, the couple sighed.

"Now, where were we?" Discord held up a finger. "Oh, I remember."

Fluttershy laughed as he dipped her to his side and welcomed him into another passionate kiss.

Don't go away! It's not over! One more chapter to go! Then I can move on to finishing up my other fics!

I know some of you were expecting the death scene in the garden, but I wanted to try something different. The Timberwolf thing is probably overdone, but as I listed all the other possible

monsters, I realized that the Timberwolves are the only ones Fluttershy can't handle or hasn't handled on her own, aside from the Ursa Minor, but really, I think she could take care of that one too. Oh boy, it took forever to get that confession scene just right! I'll admit, I pulled stuff from other *Beauty and the Beast* stories and *Once Upon a Time* , not to mention that bit from *Shrek* at the end.

Be patient. I will update as soon as possible. Right now it's very late.

The Wedding

I apologize that you've had to wait a while for this last chapter, but as Applejack says: "DF's fanfics are made with love and integrity, and only the highest quality writing in the fandom. Sorry, but that recipe takes time." Remember that in my next story!

Of all the fanfics I've written for ANY fandom, this I'd have to say has been the most dramatic and beautiful fic I've written! This took a lot of planning and I thank you for your support. And yes, I will do my best to finish my other stories.

Enjoy the last chapter every pony!

When the princesses heard of Discord's sudden reformation, it was no surprise that they were skeptical about the situation. It was Luna who eased their worry when she said:

"You gave me a second chance, sister. Why should you not do the same for him?"

Needless to say, it took an earthquake for Discord to gain their trust. After he saved Canterlot from a natural disaster, Princess Celestia saw that he had truly reformed.

Of course, it was difficult for Discord to go from plotting against Equestria to doing good deeds, but for the sake of pleasing his beloved, he controlled himself. Most of the time. He still played a few pranks on ponies every now and then, but hey, he was the Lord of Chaos, after all.

Life in Equestria could not have been better, especially for Fluttershy and Discord. Now that the tension was lost between them, their dates were less stressful. When he was not spending his time with her, the draconequus was helping ponies with their problems. For instance, he settled a disagreement between Spitfire and Rainbow

Dash. It turned out that the prior was giving the latter a hard time because she was jealous of her and Soarin. He also used his magic to protect Equestria from disasters, making Fluttershy the proudest pony in the world.

It was a year following their confession when he proposed again.

He had surprised her while on a picnic, making a ring box appear and popping the question, as he had done a year ago, only this time, she was more than willing to say yes. He gave her the very same ring, but the inscription had changed.

" To my one and only Fluttershy ," she read, " the love of my life, the apple of my eye, my other half. Without you, my life is empty. I still think that one day I'm going to wake up and meeting you was all a dream, but if it is, I'll take it. You are the best thing that's ever happened to me and I hope you can say the same about me. "

She then realized she had been turning the ring over and over, the message continuing. She looked up at the draconequus.

"I'm not going to ask how you managed to fit all that in."

He chuckled. "Believe me. That's the *short* version!"

It took a month to plan the wedding. It was even bigger than when Cadence and Shining Armor had gotten married. Hundreds of ponies came from Ponyville and nearly every pony in Canterlot attended. Even though few were fond of the groom, inter-species marriages were very rare. Of course, many were skeptical of the match, but if pegasi, unicorns and earth ponies could get along, why could a pegasus not marry a draconequus?

On the big day, the bridesmaids hastened to get Fluttershy ready. Rarity, obviously, had made dresses for all of them, including the flower girls: Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo. Twilight was performing the ceremony.

"Oh, you look absolutely gorgeous, darling!" Rarity exclaimed once she had made the final adjustments to Fluttershy's gown.

She directed her toward the mirror and Fluttershy thought she was looking at another pony. Her dress was simple, but elegant, with a vine design for trimming. Her veil hung from a wreath of pink roses, which sat perfectly atop her curled hair.

"Rarity," she marveled. "It's beautiful!"

"*You're* beautiful, Fluttershy!" Rarity hailed. "I only made you better!"

Rainbow Dash laughed. "I never thought *you'd* be the first of us to get married, Fluttershy."

The unicorn sighed. "Yes. I thought it would be me, as I did catch Cadence's bouquet, but...oh, you really do look the part, sweetie!"

"Maybe you'll be next, Rainbow," Applejack chuckled, teasingly poking the blue pegasus in the side. "*Soarin* might pop the question any day now!"

"Ooh!" Pinkie chimed. "Then we can have *another* wedding! How does next week sound?"

"Knock it off, you guys!" Rainbow shouted, blushing. "We've only been dating for a year."

"Fluttershy and Discord dated for a year!"

"Yeah, but..."

"And you love him right?"

"Well, I..."

"Admit it! You love him, you love him, you love him, you love him, you..."

"Alright, alright! I love him!"

Pinkie jumped into the air. "Yay! Another wedding!"

"Now hold it right there! He hasn't even asked me yet!"

Every pony burst out laughing, except for Scootaloo, who shifted in her dress.

"Aren't we a little old to be flower girls? After all, we have our cutie marks."

"Maybe," Fluttershy replied, "but I couldn't think of three fillies better suited for the job."

Applejack laid a hoof on her shoulder. "We're really happy for ya, Sugar Cube."

"Even if it is Discord?"

"Well..." Rarity stammered. "We may not approve of your choice one hundred percent, but..."

Twilight finished for her. "We're happy that you're happy."

There was a frantic knock on the door. "Hey, Applejack! You in there? Emergency!"

Applejack approached the door. "One second, Spike."

"Are you mad?!" Rarity yelled. "We're getting dressed!"

The cowgirl rolled her eyes. "Do I have to go over this with you again? We. Don't. Wear. Clothes!"

As she opened the door, she blushed when she saw the dragon in his tuxedo and top hat. He was still oblivious to her feelings, which had rapidly increased now that he was in formal attire.

"Thank goodness! I'm having a problem with..."

He froze when he caught sight of the mare in front of him. He hardly recognized her without her hat. She was dressed in an autumn colored gown, her hair released from her ponytail and hanging loosely around her shoulders with a gentle curl to them, a wreath of roses sitting lightly on top. She looked ...well, like a girl. And she was not that bad. He could have sworn she was sparkling.

Applejack raised an eyebrow when she noticed him staring. "Is everything alright, Spike?"

Spike shook his head. "Yeah, I, uh...what was I saying?"

"You have a problem?"

"Oh, right! It's Discord. He's getting..." He peered over at Fluttershy and said the rest in a whisper. "Cold feet."

The cowgirl gasped and called to her friends. "I gotta go check on the groom. I'll meet y'all at the altar!"

Discord needed a best man or mare, but unfortunately, he was still a rookie when it came to making friends, so Applejack had volunteered for the role. After all, she had been the first to support the match.

When she and Spike entered the groom's dressing room, it was empty. They searched in all directions for the draconequus.

"Discord, get your rump out here!" Applejack commanded. "You're gettin' married in thirty minutes!"

She then had a thought and looked up. Sure enough, Discord was hanging by his claws from the ceiling. The cowgirl stomped her hoof.

"Get down here!"

"Make me!" Discord taunted. "I can stay up here all day!"

He summoned a pillow and stretched out against the ceiling.

"But ya gotta get married!"

"No! I can't go out there!"

"Oh, no you don't! You're not abandonin' Fluttershy at the altar!"

"I'm sorry, Applejack, but this is the honest truth: I *can't* do it!"

"Ya can't get cold feet! You're the one who wanted this to happen!"

"I'm not the one with cold feet."

He snapped his fingers and Applejack yelped as she felt a sudden chill in her hooves. She glanced down to see that they had been encased in ice.

"Quit foolin' and get down! Fluttershy's gonna be heartbroken!"

"What makes you think she will be?"

She spun around as the draconequus teleported beside her. She tried to tackle him, but her hooves were stiff in the ice. Discord sighed and went over to stare at his reflection in the mirror.

"What makes you think she'll care if I leave her? She'll probably be relieved!"

"How can you say that?" Spike inquired.

"Well, just *look* at me! I don't know how I could possibly have thought *I* could be worthy of *her*! She's the most beautiful pony that ever lived and I'm just a lowly draconequus. Even if I'm not evil anymore, that's never going to change."

"But you're..."

Applejack attempted to walk over to him, but she could not shake off the blocks of ice. Spike used his dragon breath to melt them and free her.

"Thanks," she beamed, before approaching Discord. "Now listen here, partner. You may be...different, but I've never seen Fluttershy so happy in my life. You may not be the same species, but love comes in all forms."

"Yeah," Spike nodded. "Like with me and..."

He trailed off unexpectedly, his cheeks turning pink as he avoided their gaze.

"Like with you and Rarity?" Discord huffed. "Please, like *that's* ever going to...yow!"

He cried out as Applejack stepped on his tail. He caressed it as he glared at her.

"What was that for?"

"Never mind that!" the southern pony shouted. "My point is that I know what love looks like, and I've never seen two ponies, or any other creatures, more in love than you and Fluttershy. Unless I was mistaken and you don't love her..."

"What are you talking about?" Discord snapped. "Of course, I love her! You think I would have asked her to marry me if I didn't love her? You think I would have given up my plans for hostile takeover if I didn't love her? Well, let me tell you something, *AJ*! I love that pony more than anything! You hear? More than anything!"

Applejack smirked. "Whadya waiting for then?"

The draconequus blinked and then glanced in the mirror. He then snapped his fingers, making a tuxedo appear on his body.

"Look out, baby! Your new hubby's coming!" He slicked back his mane. "Oh yes, you handsome devil! You can do this!"

"I can't do this!"

He winced as Applejack nudged him in the side. "You better not bail!"

Every pony was in their positions at the altar. Rainbow Dash, Rarity and Pinkie Pie were lined up beside the bride's vacant space, Applejack stood alongside Discord, Spike ready with the rings. Twilight stood in the middle, beneath the arch of roses.

The guests had all arrived and the room was packed. Since Discord and Fluttershy had no relations, the Canterlot folk sat on the groom's side while the ponies from Ponyville and Cloudsdale sat on the bride's, along with many of Fluttershy's animal friends. Discord could recognize a few faces, including Zecora, Big Macintosh and Cheerilee (who were married months ago), Granny Smith,

Rainbow's boyfriend Soarin, Fancy Pants, the Cakes with their twin toddlers, Twilight's parents, Rarity's parents, Pinkie's family, Rainbow's father and many of Applejack's cousins. Celestia and Luna were seated in the back row, since they were the tallest. Cadence and Shining Armor sat up front, holding their pink newborn filly, Flutterby Lily. They had named her in honor of Fluttershy, of course.

Twilight noticed Discord's nervousness. "You're not getting cold feet, are you?"

"Of course not!" he choked. "In fact, it's quite hot in here, don't you think?"

He tugged on the collar of his suit and wiped the sweat from his brow. "You don't suppose she's changed her mind, do you?"

"She's not late," Rainbow Dash whispered. "The ceremony's not supposed to start until three."

"But every pony's here! Shouldn't we start now? Ouch!"

"Pull yourself together!" Applejack hissed.

"Quit doing that!" He pulled his tail away and turned the end into a fan.

"Relax. We haven't been standing here that long."

"You sure? This seems to be taking an *eternity*! I should know! I spent that time in stone!"

"Put that fan away! It's startin'!"

Sure enough, the bird choir began singing the bridal march, with Angel directing them. Discord returned his tail to normal as the doors opened. As the flower girls hopped down the aisle, scattering their petals, he started panicking.

What am I doing? I shouldn't be here! Why am I here?

Then he looked up and remembered why.

She entered the room with grace and elegance, causing every pony to gawk in awe. She walked down the aisle with her head held high, meeting the groom's gaze through her veil. Her long train was carried by more birds.

A smile spread across Discord's face. "She's beautiful."

Applejack gave him a sly grin. "Easy, Sugar. Save it for the honeymoon."

Meanwhile, the others were tearing up, including the flower girls.

"It's so romantic," Sweetie Belle whispered.

"I just hope he doesn't go all berserk again," Apple Bloom muttered.

"Naw," Scootaloo said. "If any pony can handle that guy, it's Fluttershy."

Fluttershy giggled at them as she passed by. Then she turned her attention back to Discord as she walked up the steps. He gently lifted her veil to reveal her beautiful face. After exchanging a loving look, they faced Twilight.

"Mares and gentle colts," the alicorn announced. "We are gathered here today to celebrate the union of Fluttershy and Discord. Never in the history of Equestria has there ever been a love so powerful, so strong, yet it started from the most unusual of circumstances. These two standing before you have proved that love surpasses all differences, all flaws, all faults."

She turned to the bride. "Do you, Fluttershy, take this, um, draconequus to be your lawfully wedded husband, in sickness and in health, until death, do you part?"

Fluttershy looked up into Discord's adoring eyes. "I do."

"And do you, Discord, take this mare to be your lawfully wedded wife, in sickness and in health, until death, do you part?"

He was so lost in his bride's eyes that he did not hear her at first. "Huh? Oh, I do! Yes, I most definitely do!"

Twilight chuckled. "In that case, may I have the rings?"

Spike presented the pillow and Twilight used her magic to levitate the rings. One was attached to a gold chain, which she placed around Fluttershy's neck. The other slid onto the middle finger of Discord's lion paw.

"By the power vested in me," the alicorn continued, "I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss..."

The draconequus did not wait for her to finish and pulled his bride in for a dip before pressing his lips against hers. Most of the audience cringed, but then stomped their hooves in applause.

Rarity nudged Rainbow Dash and tilted her head outside.

"Oh, right!"

The pegasus zoomed out of her gown and out into the skies. The couple pulled away just in time to see her sonic rainboom through the windows.

"BEST WEDDING EVER!" Pinkie cried.

The reception was held in the garden. Vinyl Scratch played the song for the bride and groom's first dance: "Some Pony to Love." Discord had selected it, considering it 'their song.' Afterwards, a slower song was played, drawing various couples onto the dance floor.

"Shall we?" Soarin bowed to Rainbow Dash.

"Um, it's kinda slow, isn't it?"

"Well, I get it if you're not up to the challenge..."

"Hey, wait a minute! Are you saying I can't handle a slow dance?"

"Can you?"

She grabbed his hoof. "Come on, you rascal."

Meanwhile, Rarity was met with an all too familiar unicorn stallion.

"Miss Rarity," Prince Blueblood greeted. "Would you care for a dance?"

She narrowed her eyes at him. "You're kidding me, right?"

Fortunately, she was saved by another unicorn stallion. "Pardon me, your highness, but may I cut in?"

Rarity's eyes lit up at the sight of Fancy Pants. "You most certainly may!"

Spike sighed as he watched the girl of his dreams dance with another guy. Applejack noticed his sadness and approached him, following his gaze.

"Sorry, Sugar Cube."

The dragon shrugged. "Yeah, whatever. I guess some things just aren't meant to be."

"Hey, you never know. They could be just friends."

"But what if they're not?"

"Then you let it be. If you really love some pony, you do what makes them happy." She put an encouraging hoof on his shoulder. "But hey, if you ever need a shoulder to cry on, I'm here."

Spike looked up at her. She was wearing her hat again, but that did not change the affect she had on him. His heart fluttered in a similar way it did for Rarity, but he felt something else along with it: comfort, familiarity. He rubbed his arm nervously.

"Hey, Applejack...you, um...wanna dance?"

The cowgirl could not believe her ears. "Ya mean it?"

"Yeah, you know...if you want to..."

She smiled at him warmly. "I'd love to."

Discord gazed down at his new wife as she buried her face in his fur. Then he noticed a familiar figure standing off to the side.

"Yo, Zecora!" he called.

Fluttershy looked up as he led her over to the zebra.

"Greetings, you lovebirds, and salutations," she said. "I just wanted to offer my congratulations."

"We have *you* to thank for this," the bride insisted.

Discord raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean? I never told you."

"See, before I accepted your deal, I went to Zecora for advice and she told me that you weren't all that bad and we would be happy together. Wait. Never told me what?"

"That / asked Zecora for advice and she told me to make you that garden! Hey, hold on!" He pointed accusingly at the zebra. "You *knew* this was going to happen all along, didn't you?"

Zecora laughed as she walked away. "Nice to see you finally catch up. Why do you think I set you up?"

"B-but...how did she...? She's not even a unicorn! And that wasn't even a rhyme!"

Fluttershy silenced him with her hoof. "Does it really matter, dear?"

He sighed and took her in his arms. "No, I guess not."

The carriage was ready with six horses to take the couple home, but Discord waved them off.

"No need to exert yourselves, boys. We can drive ourselves."

He snapped his fingers, releasing the stallions and opened the door for his bride with a bow.

"Shall we be off, my dear?"

Fluttershy was about to step inside but paused. "Oh, I almost forgot!"

She picked up her bouquet of flowers and tossed it over her shoulder. All the single mares wrestled to catch it.

"MINE!" Rarity shouted, trying to push the others out of the way. "For sure, this time!"

But the bouquet went high above her head and the crowd parted to reveal that it had landed in Rainbow Dash's hooves.

"Oh boy, Dashie!" Pinkie cheered. "That means you're next down the aisle!"

"W-what?" the pegasus stammered, her face flushing.

Soarin laughed beside her. "Well, you'd look pretty good in a wedding dress. Oh, that reminds me. Rainbow, there's something I've been meaning to ask you."

Once the newlyweds were in the carriage, every pony waved to them and they waved back, until they were a spot in the distance.

Discord sighed and glanced slyly at Fluttershy. "Alone at last."

He was about to put an arm around her when an acorn hit him. He turned to see Angel and the other animals sitting across from them.

"What the...what are *they* doing here?"

"Well, I said they could move in with us," Fluttershy explained.

"You *what* ?!"

"They're just going to live in the garden. They won't get in the way."

"But do they have to ride with us? I can just zap them to the garden and..."

She stopped his paw before he could cast a spell. "Please? They want to ride so badly. Don't worry. Once we get home, I'm all yours."

He groaned. "Oh, alright!"

The entire ride was awkward and silent. Whenever Discord attempted to move in on his new wife, the animals would cry out in protest and throw another acorn at him.

"I'm married to her! Get used to it!"

When they finally reached the castle, Discord did not wait to get rid of the pests.

"Okay, we're here! Now scram!"

He snapped his fingers and they were gone in a flash. Fluttershy shook her head.

"You're going to have to learn to get along with them."

"Yeah, later." He looked at her slyly. "In the meantime..."

He teleported himself outside and opened the door of the carriage. He then lifted her into his arms bridal style and carried her towards the castle.

"Home sweet home," he mused. "I hope you don't mind, but I renovated a little."

Fluttershy looked up at the estate. The dark stone had been painted pink with patches of green and purple.

"It's much more colorful."

Discord shrugged. "Yeah, dark castles are kind of boring after a while. You like?"

"Oh yes, very."

"Good, because this time, you're never *ever* leaving."

She giggled as he poked her in the belly. "I think I can live with that."

The front door opened automatically and Fluttershy could not recognize the place. The main hall was still disproportional with

stairs leading to nowhere, but all the doors were right-side-up. The walls were also green and the doors blue.

"What do you think of the interior?" Discord inquired.

"Less dizzy."

He chuckled. "I thought you'd like it. Wait until you see the honeymoon suite."

At his command, a door hanging high on the wall with no stairs leading to it opened. He flew her up to it and Fluttershy gawked at the décor of the room. Everything was in the shape of a heart: the bed, the pillows, the windows, the chandelier, the candles in the chandelier, etc. She did not know what to say about it.

"It's, um...very..."

"Mushy, I know. Makes me want to gag too, but isn't this how most honeymoon suites look?"

"I wouldn't know."

"Oh well, I'm too tired to change anything now."

The door shut behind them and a 'Do Not Disturb' sign appeared on the knob outside. Discord waved back the gossamer curtains and laid his bride on the bed.

" *Now* , we're alone," he whispered as he moved on top of her and pulled her in for a gentle kiss.

When he moved away to look at her, he caressed her beautiful face. At long last, he had his prize, his true love. What made this moment even better was that she had married him willingly with no strings attached. He never thought he would be married, let alone to the pony of his dreams. Who knew what future lay ahead of them? Maybe one day they would have a foal and become family. To him, that sounded a lot more promising than ruling Equestria.

She suddenly broke his eye contact and looked off to the side.

"What's wrong, my love?" he inquired.

"Nothing," she murmured. "I just...I'm just a little nervous. This is a big step, you know?"

He smirked. "Don't be. If I do anything you don't like, just say so."

She gazed back up at him and a small smile appeared on her lips. "I love you."

Discord's heart thumped wildly. "I love you too, my beautiful bride."

Then he clapped his hands and killed the lights.

And they lived happily ever after!

By the way, I'm making an audio adaptation of this story! I have the cast recording their lines now and the first part should be released soon!